Inscribing Devotion and Death

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Inscribing Devotion and Death

Archaeological Evidence for Jewish Populations of North Africa

By

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In memory of my father,

Kenneth M. Stern

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PREFACE

Lamp depicting Christ figure upon an inverted menorah, Carthage, Tunisia
Sketch: Delattre 1895, 40

Père Delattre, long considered to be the father of archaeology in Carthage, includes the above sketch of a "curious lamp" in his original publication on the Jewish catacombs of Gammarth, Tunisia (1895, 40).[1] Both the shape and border decoration of the artifact are typical of

[1] Attempts to interpret the artifact must rely on this unattributed sketch, because the present location of the artifact is unknown. Its earliest attestation is in Delattre's publication (1895, 40), but he furnishes neither provenance nor discussion of the artifact. Rachel Hachlili (2001, fig. VII-4, L 7.15), Claudia Setzer (1997, 198), as well as E.R. Goodenough (1953, 2.102; 3,957), and Marcel Simon (1962, figs. 3, 4) have each interpreted copies of this image.

African lamps of the fifth century, but this lamp's central image proves most unusual. An enrobed male figure occupies the upper portion of the lamp's discus; his right hand bears a cross and his left raises the hem of his robe. He stands upon a serpent, whose head is splayed along the base of an overturned, seven-branched menorah. The figure's large eyes stare at the observer.

Many to whom I have shown this image have responded in similar ways and immediately launched into a description of the artifact's "obvious" interpretation. Most say that this lamp symbolizes the triumph of orthodox Christianity over Judaism. The figure's stance upon the quintessentially Jewish symbol demonstrates Christianity's sound defeat of Judaism in Africa. Correlations between modern responses to the lamp and ancient African Christian polemical tropes about Jews, however, slowly began to raise my suspicions about the artifact's analysis.

Should the lamp's "obvious" interpretation be considered definitive? Does the lamp actually reflect Christianity's defeat of Jewish populations, or, alternatively, did an artist render its decoration to reflect a patron's desired reality? Even more provocative is the possibility that the inverted seven-armed menorah was not a sign of Jews *qua* Jews at all. Could the image, rather, allude to intra-Christian conflicts over the role of the Old Testament in light of the New? If so, might it represent the notion that the followers of Christ stand, and continue to stand, upon a Jewish tradition that Christians had superceded?

The *meaning* of this lamp's bold decoration, of course, remains elusive. Viewers' consistent interpretations of its imagery, nonetheless, exemplify problems that have beset a century of research on Jews in Roman North Africa: this lamp actually provides little information about ancient Jewish populations at all. The scholarship this book is supplanting has been incapable of interpreting this object, or at best, has unreflectively positioned it as a dominance image. Yet cautious responses to the lamp prompt more questions than the image provides answers. I return to the artifact's modified discussion in the conclusion of the book.

The Jews of Roman North Africa figure strangely in the historical record—attestations of Jewish presence in Africa are simultaneously frequent and scarce. Christian authors commonly announce that African towns teem with Jews, who are distinct rivals and antagonists who flaunt insidious ideologies. In contrast, only sporadic discoveries of Jewish archaeological materials have attested to the presence of Jews in North Africa during the late ancient period, and no identifiable Jewish

literary texts from these times and places exist to assist the interpretation of these materials. The pejorative classifications of Jews found in fiery Christian critiques contrast sharply with the silences within the ancient Jewish burial areas, which have been emptied by centuries of pillage.

Scholars' attentions to ancient North African Jewish populations have corresponded with the irregular distribution of evidence for them. North African Jews have attracted the interest of scholars of early Christianity and suffered the general neglect of scholars of ancient Judaism. In their studies of Jewish populations in North Africa, scholars of Christianity have problematically adopted the polemical perspectives of contemporaneous Christian writers. The selective studies undertaken by scholars of Judaism have been equally distorting because they have approached Jewish populations as isolated from the surrounding culture of North Africa. Both the literary and the historical abstraction of the Jewish populations from their immediate context have ultimately deprived all scholars of reasonable means to interpret evidence for them. The cumulative result of these treatments is the relegation of these ancient populations to a scholarly backwater.

While evidence for this group often appears obscure, it is nonetheless important. Other populations of Jews from throughout the Mediterranean have been studied, but continued oversight of Jewish populations in North Africa perpetuates an incomplete understanding of Jewish, as well as North African, culture in the late ancient Mediterranean. Superficial comparisons of Jewish artifacts from North Africa with those from Rome, Asia Minor, and Roman Palestine immediately reveal how distinct are African Jewish materials and how necessary it is to integrate North African evidence into the broader assessment of Mediterranean Jewish populations. Review of both Jewish and North African cultural histories remains incomplete without the consideration of this data. Improving our understanding of the broader patterns of Mediterranean cultures is one major impetus for this project.

The second compelling reason to address this evidence relates to the methodologies governing the state of the North African Jewish corpus. Closer examination of collections of this evidence reveals the grave inaccuracies embedded in the records for this population. Negligible excavation records and poor preservation of Jewish materials have impaired scholarly analyses. Scholars' dependence on local Christian and foreign rabbinic texts to interpret the African Jewish archaeological evidence has imposed additional distortion. Substantive reevaluations of the Jewish materials are possible, but require both critical review of the

state of the evidence and of the categories used for its interpretation. The approaches in this book offer corrections to the received scholarship on the topic.

During the past decade, scholars of ancient religion increasingly have begun to "read" or research "against the grain" of ancient literature, and to attempt more nuanced understandings of texts and the categories and boundaries their authors emphasized or imposed (Buell 2000, 246; Baumann 1999, 141, n. 1; Stowers 1994, 34). Certainly, this endeavor is a necessary and fruitful one for scholars of ancient Mediterranean history, early Judaism, and Christianity. Closer examination of the manners of discovery and modes of treatment of "Jewish" artifacts in North Africa, however, affirms the additional necessity of "reading against the grain" of the archaeological record. Large percentages of evidence for Jewish diaspora populations are archaeological and epigraphic and remain untouched by recent advances in textual criticism. Archaeological evidence for overlapping Jewish and Christian populations from North Africa and elsewhere in the Mediterranean therefore require comparably updated "cross-readings."

This book responds to this need with four distinct methodological moves. First, it reassesses the state of the corpus by evaluating the methods used to collect the North African data identified as "Jewish." Second, it liberates the archaeological evidence from the polemical gaze; it organizes the Jewish material evidence by replacing traditional literary taxonomies with internal and archaeological ones. While some Christian and rabbinical writers are contemporaneous with the Jewish populations in question and occasionally raise possibilities about categories of Jews and their practices in North Africa and elsewhere, their texts ought not to limit the interpretation of the archaeological record of groups of people outside of their respective literary cultures. Here, I generate analytical categories of onomastic, linguistic, devotional, and burial practices that reflect the occasions for objects' original uses. This organizational shift averts the polemical gaze and facilitates quantifiable comparisons of local Jewish and non-Jewish materials.

The third methodological step identifies particular models of cultural dynamics that facilitate substantively contextual examinations of North American Jewish archaeological evidence. This permits the fourth step: to prioritize the examination of Jewish materials in a local cultural matrix. In a world in which people did not travel much, Jews in North Africa presumably engaged more frequently with their neighbors in Africa than they did with Jews in Asia Minor. The archaeological

record requires commensurate evaluation. In this book, the priority of local African templates for interpreting African Jewish artifacts reflects this reality.

To most classicists, archaeologists, and ancient historians, as well as to scholars of religious studies, the previous methodological points should initially appear obvious and quotidian. Of course a responsible study would approach a corpus critically, would interpret artifacts outside of others' polemical gazes, and would examine minority populations in the context of the regions they inhabited. Scholars of Jewish studies, too, advocate reviewing the "local context" of Jewish populations so commonly that the notion is nearly cliché: they also should find these methods unexceptional. What, then, is particularly different about the application of these approaches in this book?

While the methods I describe are by now standard in the context of ancient studies, the complete exercise of the methodology remains unusual in the evaluation of the archaeology of ancient Jewish populations. While some scholars of Jewish texts have repeatedly critiqued essentializing and essentialist readings of Jewish literary materials and while others have assailed the employment of rabbinic and Christian writers' polemical taxonomies to understand the ranges of Jewish and Christian practices in the ancient world, very rarely have such arguments substantively impacted the evaluation of regional collections of Jewish archaeological data. Common archaeological treatments that consider ancient Jews' rates of "interaction" with local populations reflect this methodological lag: these depend on problematic understandings of intrinsic separations between Jewish and non-Jewish populations that rely upon static and unarticulated cultural models. To scholars of Jewish populations, too, "local context" often explains *differences* between archeological records for regional Jewish populations that are otherwise presumed to be similar. Scholars have accorded little space to evaluate the cultural complexities of Jewish populations that emerge *from within* broader societies. In contrast to common scholarly practice, this book fundamentally reevaluates material evidence for ancient North African Jewish populations from the inside out.

In recent years, epigraphy and archaeology have gained prominence in the scholarship of early Judaism. So too have new methods of their interpretation. Certain scholars of early Jewish and Christian populations have produced important critiques of the polemics of archaeological interpretation, while others have countered conventional and essentializing "Jewish" categories that have governed related evaluations

of archaeology.[2] Recent and comparable arguments about rabbinization, Judaization, and also Christianization use material evidence to highlight the historical contingencies that inform the developments of Judaism in late antiquity.[3] This examination of North African materials intends to integrate the benefits of the ranges of these studies.

Limitations are certainly apparent in this and any other approach to ancient Jewish populations. Few texts exist to assist the interpretation of archaeological materials and, ultimately, we can only examine as "Jewish" materials that identify themselves as such. The preservation of relevant materials and the histories and contexts of their discoveries are rarely recorded. Critical approaches to these materials therefore anticipate dismal and limited prospects. I suggest, however, that the methods and objectives that I employ offer sober alternatives to the minimalist "tossing up of the hands" response and cultivate plausible alternatives to the desirable, but unattainable, social historical study of North African Jewish populations. The result is both a limited interpretation of the evidence available and the development of a tentative cultural map for Jewish populations in North Africa in the late Roman period.

This book began as a doctoral dissertation under the auspices of the Department of Religious Studies at Brown University. The direction of Michael Satlow and Ross Kraemer, in addition to the guidance of Saul Olyan and Stanley Stowers were critical to the progress of this research. The generosity of Shaye Cohen and the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and of Rise Shepsle at the Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, facilitated my productive years of research as an exchange scholar at Harvard University. Additionally, Bruce Zuckerman and Marilyn Lundberg of the InscriptiFact Project provided my training in epigraphic photography both at the University of Southern California and in the field.

Research grants have encouraged my direct work with archaeological materials in North Africa and have assisted my completion of this manuscript. I acknowledge the Council of American Overseas

[2] For the former, see the work of Andrew Jacobs (2004) and for the latter, see the work of Michael White (1999, 2004) and Jodi Magness (2005). Each of these works demonstrates critical approaches to received traditions on the interpretation of archaeological sites and archaeology.

[3] Schwartz (2001) demonstrates a particularly refined example of this approach to received scholarship, texts, archaeology, and history.

Research Centers, whose travel grant has permitted my research at the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem, the American Academy in Rome, the Tangier American Legation Museum in Morocco, and the Centre d'études maghrébine à Tunis, in Tunisia. I am particularly grateful for the support that CEMAT provided through a short-term research grant in 2003; the tireless efforts and support of Jim Miller, Riadth Saadaoui, and Tom DeGeorges in Tunis were crucial to the transformation of my research in Tunisia. I acknowledge, furthermore, the generosity of the Cahnman family in New York, whose subvention grant through the Association for Jewish Studies facilitated the manuscript's completion.

I offer additional thanks to individuals who granted me access to rare materials that were instrumental to my research. Edward Bleiberg, Associate Curator of the Department of Egyptian, Classical, and Ancient Middle Eastern Art at the Brooklyn Museum, repeatedly culled the Hammam Lif mosaics for my review in the Museum's archives, while Stephen and Noam Adler graciously permitted me to examine the Adler's vast oil-lamp collection in Jerusalem. Dr. Roald Docter has kindly shared images of recent finds from the Belgian excavations at Carthage and Clémentine Gutron has shared with me her insightful work on historiography, archaeology, and colonialism in nineteenth and twentieth-century Tunisia.

Opportunities to discuss my work have proved invaluable to theoretical considerations in the book. Participation in faculty seminars of the School of Religion at the University of Southern California in spring 2007 encouraged my reevaluation of relationships between North African literature and archaeology. Additionally, the conference on "The Spoken and Written Word: Language and Jewish Identity," at the Graduate Theological Union-UC Berkeley Joint Program in Jewish Studies in March 2007, and the American Institute for Maghrib Studies' conference, "Jewish Culture in the Maghreb" in July 2004, Tangier, Morocco, particularly assisted my considerations of ancient language and cultural identity.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	*Antiquités africaines*
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AE	*L'Année épigraphique*
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
ANRW	*Aufsteig und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
Atl. Arch.	Cagnat, R. and A. Merlin. 1914–1932. *Atlas Archéologique de la Tunisie* (2nd series). Paris: Ernest Leroux.
BAAA	*Bibliographie analytique de l'Afrique antique*
Bardo	Ennabli, L. 2000. *Catalogue des inscriptions chrétiennes sur pierre du musée de Bardo.* Tunis: Institut national du patrimoine.
BCAN	Duval, N. and J.-P. Caillet. 1992. *Basiliques chrétiennes d'Afrique du Nord* I, II. Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes.
BCTH	*Bulletin archéologique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques*.
BE	*Bulletin épigraphique*
CIJ	Frey, J.-B. 1975. *Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum* (2 vols.). Vatican City: Pontifico Istituto Archaeologia Cristiana.
CIL	*Corpus inscriptionum latinarum*
CIS	*Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum*
Diehl	Diehl, Ernestus. 1961. *Inscriptiones latinae christianae veteris*, I–IV. Berlin: Hildebrand.
HD	*Epigraphische Datenbank Heidelberg*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IAM	Besnier, M. 1904. *Recueil des inscriptions antiques du maroc.* Paris: Archives Marocains I.
IFCC 1	Ennabli, L. 1975. *Les inscriptions funéraires chrétiennes de la basilique dite Ste. Monique à Carthage.* Palais Farnèse: École française de Rome.
IFCC 2	Ennabli, L. 1982. *Les inscriptions funéraires chrétiennes de Carthage II. La basilique de Mcidfa*. Palais Farnèse: École française de Rome.
IFCC 3	Ennabli, L. 1991. *Les inscriptions funéraires chrétiennes de Carthage III. Carthage intra et extra muros.* Palais Farnèse: École française de Rome.

IJO	Hengel, M., and P. Schäfer. 2004. *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis* (3 vols.). Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
ILA	Cagnat, R., A. Merlin, and L. Chatelain. 1923. *Inscriptions latines d'Afrique* (*Tripolitaine, Tunisie, Maroc*). Paris: Ernest Leroux.
ILAlg	Gsell, S. 1922. *Inscriptions latines de l'Algerie*. Paris: Éduard Champion.
ILM	Chatelain, Louis. 1942. *Inscriptions latines du Maroc.* Paris: Libraire Orientaliste Paul Geuthner.
ILT	Merlin, A. 1944. *Inscriptions latines de la Tunisie*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
IOILT	Ben Abdallah, Z., and L. Sebaï, eds. 1983. *Index onomastique des inscriptions latines de la Tunisie*. Paris: Editions du Centre National de la recherche scientifique.
IRA	Renier, L. 1885–1886. *Inscriptions Romaines de l'Algérie*. Paris: Picard.
IRT	Reynolds, J.M., and J.B. Ward Perkins, eds. 1952. *The Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania*. Rome: British School at Rome.
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JIWE 1	Noy, D. 1993. *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
JIWE 2	Noy, D. 1995. *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JQR	*Jerusalem Quarterly Review*
JRA	*Journal of Roman Archaeology*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
MHT	Cagnat, R. and P. Gauckler. 1898. *Les monuments historiques de la Tunisie*. Paris: Leroux.
PCBE I	Mandouze, A. 1982. *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire. I. Prosopographie de l'Afrique chrétienne (303–533)* Paris: CNRS
RA	*Revue archéologique*
Thieling	Thieling, W. 1911. *Der Hellenismus in Kleinafrika: Der griechische Kultureinfluss in den römischen Provinzen Nordwestafrikas.* Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider.
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

CHAPTER ONE

TOWARD A CULTURAL HISTORY OF JEWISH POPULATIONS IN ROMAN NORTH AFRICA

An investigation into the history of Jews of Roman North Africa would immediately reveal its three disparate features. The first of these is the obscurity of the topic. A proper scholarly treatment of the group has never been conducted. Material evidence for Jews of ancient North Africa, unlike for those who populated Asia Minor and Europe, has eluded modern scholarly examination. Epigraphic evidence for this population was marginalized at an early stage: Jean Baptiste Frey died before he was able to compile the corpus of North African regional inscriptions in a manner comparable to his treatment of their European counterparts.[1] Shimon Applebaum and Victor Tcherikover thoroughly investigated neighboring Jewish communities in ancient Cyrene and Egypt, but their studies halted at the borders of the western Roman African provinces. Broader studies of Mediterranean Judaism have, in turn, neglected this group: in his work on *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (332–117 B.C.E.)*, John Barclay does not even mention Jews in North Africa outside of Egypt, while in her compendium on *The Jews under Roman Rule*, Mary Smallwood mentions Jews from the region only in passing.[2]

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[1] The absence of more specific studies on North African materials has particularly kept inscriptions and archaeology of this region out of the limelight. Frey's collection of Jewish inscriptions of Western Europe (*CIJ*) has facilitated countless studies of previously neglected ancient Jewish populations. The absence of a collection of North African materials eliminated scholars' easy access to and specific review of North African Jewish inscriptions specifically. No subsequent scholars have undertaken a more substantial study of the evidence for this population, which requires more thorough treatment than that possible within a chapter or an article.

[2] Smallwood notes the existence of inscriptions found in Rome (*CIJ* 390, 408) which commemorate synagogues with members from Tripoli (1981, 251). It remains unclear which ancient Tripoli these references intend (whether along the eastern or southern Mediterranean coast). The editors of Schürer's *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* similarly devote only two pages to summarizing some of the archaeological and epigraphic evidence for Jews from this region (Schürer 1986, III.1, 64).

A second trend is a focus on origins. Isolated studies of Jewish archaeological finds have addressed the lineages of North African Jews and have emphasized a strong relationship between these Jewish populations and their origins. To Père Delattre, Carthaginian Jews were actually Jewish Christians who had traveled to North Africa directly from the Holy Land, just after the death of Christ himself. These bearers of the "good news" had established the earliest Jewish Christian communities on the African continent. Alternatively, to H.Z. Hirschberg and Marcel Simon, this same group had come directly from ancient Israel after the destruction of the first temple: these Jews had founded the beginnings of Sephardic Jewish traditions in North Africa, which ultimately extended to the present day. To Yann Le Bohec, on the other hand, these groups were definitively Roman Palestinian and rabbinic. The alignment of Carthaginian Jews' funerary architecture with the prescriptions for underground burial in Babylonian rabbinic texts, Le Bohec thought, was sufficient evidence to characterize as "Talmudic" an entire Jewish necropolis and the historical population that buried there (Le Bohec 1981a).[3] In these cases, the Jews' posited Palestinian origins and Talmudic practices are elided—such classifications for the group are considered nearly synonymous (Delattre 1895; Le Bohec 1981, 165; Rives 1995, 215–218).

One last tendency within scholarship of African Jews is found within studies related to North African Christian writings and legal codes. Scholars of early Latin Christianity have shown particular interest in this group; they reconsider evidence for North African Jews and participate in passionate debates about Jews' relationships to contemporaneous Christians. Earlier studies by W.H.C. Frend describe accounts of extensive antipathy between Jewish and Christian communities as real, because, as Tertullian had implied, Jews were committed adversaries of North African Christian groups (*Scorp.* X; Frend 1970). Charles Bobertz and Paula Fredriksen have proposed differing readings of such texts; they suggest that the relationships between Jewish and Christian communities may have been less acrimonious than some Christian writers initially seemed to indicate (Bobertz 1991; Fredriksen 1995). Literary and archaeological evidence for Jewish and Christian groups suggests to Claudia Setzer a more wide-ranging set of relationships; she argues that North African Jews may have maintained idiosyncratic

[3] Le Bohec particularly draws this comparison with *b. Baba Batra* 100b–102b.

Jewish practices, as well as ranges of behaviors appropriately labeled as "Jewish Christian," "Judaizing Christian," and "Christianizing Jewish" (1997, 167). Still other scholars, such as T.D. Barnes, have suggested that the meager state of the sources prevents any improved understanding of these Jewish and Christian groups at all (1971, 285). Regardless of scholars' specific conclusions about North African Jews, their constant consideration of the topic attests to its importance among certain scholars of early Christianity: as Barnes wrote in the revised edition of his work on Tertullian, no aspect of his book had received as much attention as his previous conclusions about North African Jewish evidence (1985, 329).

The quantity of literary and material evidence for Jewish culture in Roman North Africa is, in fact, rather limited. In light of this, the disparity among scholars' attentions to the group and the range of conclusions they have drawn about them appear as particularly strange. Why would Jewish populations so neglected within scholarship of Judaism in antiquity appear so prominently within the scholarship of early Christianity? Why would some scholars care so much about the origins and character of these populations and why do the conclusions of these studies differ so much from each other? What could account for their discrepant emphases, distinct hypotheses about African Jews' origins, and considerations of Jews' relationships to their neighbors? Finally, why might the quantity of the evidence for these communities be sufficient for some scholars and not for others?

I offer three broader explanations for the problems listed above, to which I devote attention in the remainder of this chapter. First, much of the evidence upon which these studies depend derives from a deeply flawed and arbitrary literary and archaeological corpus. Variability within scholars' treatments of North African Jews results from the lack of foundation for many of their conclusions—the present state of the evidence cannot support their arguments. A second explanation relates to the problematic typologies scholars have used to structure and interpret the archaeological evidence. Scholars have organized a material record for North African Jews according to classifications originally composed by ancient Christian writers. In subtle ways, then, polemical concepts introduced by Christian authors have continued to shape interpretations of evidence for North African Jews. The last explanation relates to assumptions that scholars have made about ancient Jewish populations, their collective identities, their essential similarities to each other, and their intrinsic separation from surrounding pagan

and Christian populations. The imposition of these unarticulated and essentialist frameworks onto a static archaeological record for Jewish populations has yielded multiple and problematic interpretations of the history of Jews in Roman North Africa.

Limitations in previous scholarship on Roman North African Jews have fundamentally related to the reasons for scholars' original attentions to them. In most cases, scholars were not primarily interested in North African Jews, but in something else, such as relations between Jews and Christians in North Africa or relationships between Jewish theologies and the contemporaneous treatises of Latin Christian writers. Scholars have necessarily approached their investigations from these other angles. A closer review of their scholarship reveals the logic of their resulting conclusions.

Specific ideologies and interests among scholars of early Judaism and Christianity have shaped the degree and manner with which they have considered these populations. Scholars have cared much (or little) about the North African Jewish materials in very specific ways. Their invested approaches to the subject and reliance on speculations based on erratic archaeology have engendered a varied scholarship on North African Jewish history. Conclusions about North African Judaism, therefore, are varied and incompatible, because they result from applications of diverse scholarly and polemical interests to a problematic archaeological record. Although scholars have been writing about North African Jews since the late nineteenth century, the pervasiveness of these problems has resulted in surprisingly meager progress in understanding this ancient population.

Unlike previous studies, this book directly asks what we can know about the Jews of Roman North Africa given the state of the material evidence. This small shift in perspective creates an entirely different picture of North African Jewish populations. I demonstrate why dependence on extant North African literature only obscures the investigation of North African Jewish culture. I develop a distinct method for examining archaeological evidence, which permits attention to the precise times and places of its construction and discovery. Ultimately, I argue that North African Jewish cultures were substantively North African and can only be understood in relation to their diachronically and geographically variable North African cultural contexts.

In North Africa, Jewish cultural identities were complex, varied and regionally diverse, as African Jews used naming, language, and devotional and burial practices to demonstrate a range of relationships to

their local cultural environments. In some cases, Jewish archaeological evidence appears to be nearly identical to that of non-Jewish North Africans. In other circumstances, Jewish archaeological evidence is simultaneously similar to and different from that of neighboring North African groups. At rare points, Jewish evidence appears to be quite distinct and is explicitly marked as such. In all cases, however, the very artifacts and practices through which Jewish populations signified their sameness and difference to the culture around them also depended upon the tools they drew from North African cultures. In short, Jewish cultural identities of the second through sixth centuries C.E. were inextricable from their North African milieus.

Former approaches to North African Jewish evidence depended on a series of assumptions and questions that restricted the possibilities for analyzing it. In contrast, undertake a basic reevaluation of the material evidence and of the methods previously used to classify it. First, I suggest the importance of identifying how various interests have shaped the archaeological record, and I demonstrate how that record is neither representative nor impartial. Second, I suggest that the traditional Christian polemical cast on the Jewish materials is not inevitable, but the result of a scholarly choice. Third, I illustrate why Jewish evidence should not be examined in cultural isolation, but rather as intrinsically relational to its broader cultural context. This complete approach acknowledges the limitations of the archaeological and literary evidence, but eschews the additional ideological limitations scholars have imposed; it requires a close scrutiny of why and how other approaches have failed and highlights how theological archaeology, archaeological accidents, scholarly biases, and polemical typologies have become imperceptibly embedded within the data itself. Ultimately, this distinct approach to the North African literary and archaeological materials inspires different questions and answers about the Jewish evidence.

I. Archaeology and the Creation of "Data"

The first methodological flaw that has hampered a proper understanding of Jews in Roman North Africa relates to the practice of both colonial and theological archaeology. The initial methods of discovery and the subsequent treatment of all ancient artifacts from North Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries related directly to the politics and religion of North Africa's colonists.

A. *Colonialism, Theology and the Fruits of North African Archaeology*

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, French scholars, clergy, and soldiers initiated the first systematic programs of archaeological excavation in North Africa in the modern period.[4] Their discovery and classification of Jewish as well as Christian and Roman artifacts in the western region were closely tied to the broader objectives of their political and religious colonization of the area. As such, North African artifacts and archaeology were strangely personal to European scholars and theologians.[5] They served as physical proofs of their direct relationship to previous conquerors of the North African lands.

1. *Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Colonial Excavations*

Those who preserved, translated, and catalogued the majority of extant Roman and Christian artifacts clearly articulated their beliefs in con-

[4] Earliest modern interest in ancient North Africa responded to the movements of classicism, colonialism, and religious missionary activity which stirred nineteenth-century Europe. From the beginning of the 1800s, gentlemen making their "grand tours" were drawn to the Carthage which had captured their imaginations through the ancient texts of Virgil, Appian, and Livy (Gutron 2004, 1–2). Travelers advertised their exploits in the region: in 1807, Chateaubriand described his visit to Carthage (1946), while Flaubert boasted his intimate knowledge of the area's geography in his novel *Salammbo* (Gutron 2004, 1). Other English and French explorers published memoirs to describe their African adventures in the region (Davis 1861; Sainte-Marie 1884). Academic and archival associations were quickly founded to support the burgeoning of interest in the region's antiquities; Falbe, a Danish man, founded the "Societé pour l'exploration de Carthage," while the archaeological museum, Musée de Lavigerie, was established in 1875 on the Byrsa Hill in Carthage to house the area's antiquities (Gutron 2004, 4). Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Libya attracted increasing numbers of adventurous and scholarly Europeans. The French collected artifacts from their principle regions of colonization (Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco) while the Italians mostly worked within their zones of political domination in Libya. Though different motives drove each nationality, the practice of late nineteenth and early twentieth century archaeology was shaped by complex processes of colonialism.

[5] The majority of work on North African Jews, however, was undertaken by Christian clergy, and Christian interest in Jewish and Christian origins in North Africa remains an important aspect of the earliest archaeological reports for Jewish materials. Within this context, archaeologists' and scholars' emphasis on North African Jews' origins in Palestine has been consistent. This assertion of the Jews' origins has been sustained by comparisons of the Jewish burial areas from Carthage with those from Roman Palestine and with those described within rabbinic texts (Delattre 1895; Le Bohec 1981, 179). For additional descriptions of this tendency and its ramifications, see discussion above and in chapter six.

nections between France and ancient Rome. Venerable scholars such as Cagnat asserted:

> We can therefore without fear and despite the numerous shortcomings, which we should not ignore, compare our occupation of Algeria and Tunisia to that of the same African provinces by the Romans: as they, we try to transform it to our own image and to win it for civilization.
> (Cagnat 1913, 776; translation, Van Dommelen 1997, 307)

Cagnat and other French philologists, epigraphers, and amateur archaeologists explicitly declared their relationships to Roman "predecessors" and to North Africa's present inhabitants: they understood themselves to be missionaries of classical civilization to the uncultured North African masses.[6]

2. *Excavations of Missionaries*

French Catholic missionaries in Africa took charge of another facet of this interest in antiquity. After all, an important component of the French colonizing agenda was an explicitly theological one, as some of the greatest fathers of Latin Christianity had once written and orated on North African soil (Daniélou 1977, 233; Raven 1993, 144). Nineteenth-century Catholic missionaries understood as a brief aberration the fact that Muslims now dwelled in cities such as Hippo and Bône in Algeria, Carthage in Tunisia, and Oea in Libya, which were once visited and inhabited by Cyprian, Tertullian, and Augustine, as well as Perpetua and Felicitas. French missionaries, such as those in the Catholic order of the Pères Blancs, dreamed that these lands and cities would soon return to their original and appropriate state—North Africa would once again be the domain of Catholic Christians (Gutron 2004, 2).[7]

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[6] The French viewed themselves both as conquerors and cultural saviors of North Africa in ways similar to their ancient Roman predecessors (Cagnat 1913, 776). The French attention to antiquities and archaeology in North Africa fulfilled one aspect of this self-understanding; excavation of ancient works, inscriptions, and sites affirmed France's connection to the lands of the Roman past, and to the durability and importance of colonial civilizing traditions (Cagnat 1913, 775–777).

[7] French politicians and theologians announced their emulation of the ancient "Christianization" of North Africa. Immediately after his taking of Algiers in 1930, Charles X obtained permission from the ruling Moncef Bey to gain possession of the Byrsa Hill, the mythical center of Carthage, in order to erect a monument there to St. Louis, who had died in Carthage in his proselytizing efforts during the eighth Crusade (Gutron 2004, 2). The Byrsa Hill subsequently maintained a central position in the regional consolidation and exploration of antiquities, as, on May 24, 1875, Cardinal

The practice of archaeology reinforced an intertwining of colonial and missionary agendas. The establishment at Carthage of the French Catholic order of the Pères Blancs was as explicitly an archaeological as it was a religious endeavor. Cardinal Lavigerie described: "En fondant le college Saint-Louis, j'ai chargé les missionaries d'Alger, qui le dirigent de veiller sur les trésors cachés qui les entourent, et de travailler à les découvrir" (Lavigerie 1881, 7; reported in Gutron 2004, 2). The earliest "archaeologists" in the region of Carthage were Pères Blancs and Père Delattre, "l'homme de Carthage," was the most prolific of these (Audollent 1901, 24; Gutron 2004, 2). Delattre and subsequent members of the order, such as Gauckler and Ferron, uncovered and documented hundreds of ancient sites and artifacts in the region (Wells 1996, 157–158). The antiquities in Carthage were uncovered, catalogued, and governed by the colonial enterprise and the new religious order.

3. *Excavation Methodology and Its Impact on the Preservation and Classification of Jewish Evidence*

How did colonists' and missionaries' methods impact the preservation and classification of the Jewish evidence? If the French were primarily concerned with their self-representations *vis-à-vis* ancient Romans and Christians, did their agendas have any bearing on the preservation of Jewish evidence at all? In most cases, the trace of their agenda on the archaeological record is implicit and imperceptible within the report of the materials themselves. In specific instances, however, their classification of artifacts and sites as Jewish and their methods of analyzing these materials, explicitly supported the Pères' own self-understanding. Reports of the Jewish catacombs at Gammarth provide one example of this tendency. Though its earliest explorers thought the burial complex was Punic, because of its similarities to other local burial structures (Sainte-Marie 1884), Delattre and others quickly announced it to be entirely Jewish and, specifically, of Palestinian association. Why? What accounted for the complete shift in its classification?

Lavigerie successfully petitioned for the French missionaries of Algeria to establish both a commemoration of the tomb of St. Louis and a museum to house antiquities on the Byrsa Hill's crest (Gutron 2004, 2).

To be certain, one aspect of Gammarth's designation responded to the discovery of definitive Jewish evidence within it. Père Delattre reclassified the users of these catacombs as "juives" when he discovered images of menorot on some of the precinct's funerary stelai (Delattre 1895).[8] Père Ferron's subsequent excavations in the region reaffirmed this connection: his continued discoveries of funerary stelai with inscribed menorot and Hebrew sentiments, along with other Latin and Greek epitaphs, substantiated the classification of the burial area as Jewish (1951; 1956).[9] But why was the entire catacomb complex considered to be Jewish based on individual artifacts, and why was its construction compared to those catacombs within Palestine, rather than those within North Africa?

French missionaries had much invested in describing their own spiritual lineage in the North African territories. Their exultant discovery of the Palestinian origins of this African Jewish burial complex was essential to Beulé and Delattre—the "Jewishness" of the catacombs furnished French missionaries with a series of invaluable proofs. Père Delattre's likening of the loculi of the Gammarth catacombs to the constructions of the tombs of Lazarus and of Christ himself ("Les caveaux était primitivement fermés à l'aide d'une Pierre comme le tombeau de Lazare et comme celui de Notre Seigneur"; 1895, 17) enabled him to conclude that the Gammarth necropolis was not only Jewish, but specifically related to the Palestinian origins of earliest Christianity in North Africa: "Il y a tout lieu de croire que les premières conversions à Carthage comme à Jerusalem, eurent lieu parmi les Juifs. La nécropole de Gamart a peut-être servi à la sépulture des premiers fidèles carthinagois" (1895, 49).[10]

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[8] At the time, French archaeologists were intent on uncovering the past of the "Caanaei" or ancient Canaanites in the Hebrew Bible, via their discoveries of Canaanite's descendant populations in Carthage (e.g., de Vogüé, 1889). The inscriptions from the cemetery did not contain any Punic texts, but they were still classified as such since the underground burial complex on Gammarth hill was situated and designed similarly to other Punic necropoleis in the region (Sainte-Marie 1884).

[9] Archaeological exploration in the region diminished between the first and second world wars, on account of the diversion of funds for the war. See discussion of Goodenough (1953, 2.89).

[10] Delattre describes how: "Il y avait assurément des Juifs à Carthage lorsque les envoyés de la Bonne-Nouvelle y firent leur apparition. Une tradition conservée par Flavius Dexter veut que Saint Pierre soit passé en Afrique et une autre tradition d'origine grecque fait mourir à Carthage la Samaritaine et son fils Joseph. Enfin Nicéphore Callixte dit expressément que l'apôtre Simon aurait visité toute la Libye en prêchant l'Évangile… [quote above] … Mais les chrétiens ne tardèrent pas à avoir leurs

French missionaries had "returned" to North Africa to emulate St. Augustine, whose legacy had been interrupted by the Arabs' conquest in the seventh century. Archaeological evidence for Palestinian Jews in Gammarth now demonstrated direct connections between African Jews and the original Jewish Christians from Roman Palestine. These origins achieved the most esteemed connections for the French Catholic fathers themselves—they demonstrated that the Palestinian Judaism of Jesus possessed a physical link with the Christianity of Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine whose mantle the French clergy now resumed, nearly two thousand years later (Delattre 1895, 49). Their cast of Gammarth as an entirely "Jewish Christian" site which had direct ties to the very origins of Christianity was an important coup.

The archaeological conclusions of these Pères Blancs provided necessary proofs for those with colonial and missionary concerns (Beulé 1861; Delattre 1895), but they resulted in permanent and inaccurate classifications of artifacts and distinct ramifications for their interpretation. The vagueness of the Pères Blancs' archaeological reports have led some to assume that nearly all artifacts from the Gammarth region are Palestinian "Jewish" and should be interpreted accordingly (e.g., Le Bohec nos. 25–63).[11] The sureness of Delattre's classifications has also deterred scholars from using local comparisons for the architecture of the funerary complex: despite Gammarth's similarities to burial structures in the greater region of Carthage, scholars have maintained Palestinian burial architecture as Gammarth's primary analogue (Hachlili 1998; Goodenough 1957).[12] Gammarth has remained unquestioned as the region's most important Jewish burial site and Palestinian comparisons for the burial architecture and artifacts at Gammarth have

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cimitières particuliers conformément à un usage qu'autorisait la loi romaine. Nous les avons retrouvés sous les murs de la ville. Si des chrétiens ont été inhumes à Gamart cela parait n'avoir été que par exception." (Delattre 1895, 49).

[11] Le Bohec assumes that any Jewish funerary artifacts discovered outside Gammarth, but within the Carthage region, originated in this burial complex (*e.g.*, Le Bohec no. 20). Le Bohec labels one inscription with a menorah (Victorinus cesquet in pace et irene) discovered by the Byrsa Hill as "provient sans doute de la nécropole de Gamart" (Le Bohec, 1981a, 180, no. 20).

[12] Setzer raises the possibility that one of the inscriptions, which Delattre includes in his discussion of Gammarth artifacts and Le Bohec excludes in his, mentions the martyr Stephen. She holds that the Jewish discovery context of a martyr's epitaph might provide an example of a Christianizing Jew (1997, 193). The inscription's final context, however, is entirely ambiguous; it appears to have been discovered in a secondary context. Vagueness of archaeological reports additionally complicates discussions of such artifacts and their provenances.

remained the primary vehicle for their interpretation (Goodenough 1957; Hachlili 1998).

But should we continue to trust Delattre's overarching categorization of these catacombs as "Jewish"? What does such a classification even mean? Were the burial chambers excavated in a careful enough manner to support such a confident classification? And why have scholars so closely followed Beulé's and Delattre's directives to limit their analyses to Palestinian, rather than local North African archaeological comparisons? These Christian archaeologists in North Africa were concerned with their Christian lineages. By unquestioningly maintaining the Père Blancs' earliest designations, scholars implicitly sustain the priorities of Catholic and French missionaries and permit them to continue to dominate the exploration of Jewish burial practice in North Africa.

B. *Archaeology as Destruction*

That the archaeological record is the result of accidental preservation is obvious. At times, however, processes of modern excavation have impinged on the archaeological record more than scholars of Jewish materials have reported.

In 1937, an American traveler, Maynard Owen Williams, described his encounter with the antiquities collections of the Musée de Lavigerie (now the Carthage Museum) in his trip through Carthage. He expressed his shock thus: "This priceless hoard of historic loot would disconcert a modern archaeologist, for scant records were made of the exact places and conditions where the relics of long-gone centuries were brought to light" (1937, 346). Williams was discussing the state of collection and preservation for all antiquities in Carthage, not necessarily Jewish ones.[13] Yet this reported disorganization reflects broader problems with

[13] Museum collections throughout the Mediterranean have been impacted by disorganization and the vicissitudes of local and foreign exploration and excavation. Museums within North Africa, in this respect, resemble those of the region's neighbors. Yet unlike other areas of the Mediterranean in the late nineteenth century, which were excavated by German and Northern French archaeologists with deliberate training, North Africa suffered the brunt of explorers' souvenir taking, in addition to eclectic and pillage-style excavation and artifact collection. Unfortunately, the lack of museum curatorship combined with explorers' erratic removal and destruction of objects—without records of any related activities. These difficulties of excavation and cataloguing of artifacts are again exemplified by the challenges posed by artifacts from Gammarth; the

the archaeological program at Carthage, for Jewish and non-Jewish artifacts and sites alike. The treatment of Jewish (and non-Jewish) archaeological materials in colonial French and modern North Africa has further curtailed modern scholars' abilities to accurately analyze the artifacts themselves.

1. *Gammarth Catacombs*

The excavation history of the Gammarth catacombs again demonstrates the process whereby the archaeological collections at Carthage became so muddled. The burial complex, situated within the French military cemetery on Gammarth Hill, 11 km north of Tunis, was corrupted long before Delattre's initial forays in the area. Centuries of grave robbers and explorers had already shuffled through the Gammarth catacombs before the earliest Western explorer documented them in the early nineteenth century. In the early 1830s, the Danish traveler, Falbé, published a description of the burial complex (1833), while the British explorer, Nathaniel Davis, was the first to announce his "excavation" of the area; he recounts how his discoveries of funerary markers and grave goods from the burial complex were punctuated by encounters with marauding hyenas (1861). Neither Falbé nor Davis furnished records of their findings, maps of objects' original positions, or their stratigraphy.[14]

The site's rediscovery, twenty years later, resulted only from observations of its pillage. Delattre recounts an event on 4 April 1881, which occurred while the "Père et fondateur" Cardinal Lavigerie took a stroll on the Gammarth Hill with two orphans. The orphans had run ahead, but returned to Lavigerie to report what they saw:

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problems within both the Carthage Museum's organization and the site's excavation possess distinct ramifications for analysis of the artifacts from the site.

[14] In his report on Gammarth, Delattre describes how one of the explorers in the 1880s, M. d'Hérisson, also excavated the area, but that his analyses were untrustworthy: "Il n'a rien publié, que je sache, sur ses découvertes. D'ailleurs, après son rapport fantaisiste sur les fouilles qu'il avait exécutées à Utique, on ne pourrait accepter sans réserves ses assertions" (Delattre 1895, 22). M. d'Hérisson was not the only Frenchman to endeavor excavating without bothering to publish his finds except in prose form. The number of antiquities that were discovered and that remain undocumented from this period remains disconcerting, but few excavation reports exist.

> …des Arabes en train de détruire un hypogée pour en extraire la pierre calcaire et en fair de la chaux.…Après avoir détruit des cavaux de facile accès, ils en avaient atteint d'autres plus dissimulés sous le sol. Un de ces derniers, visité jadis, conservait, au-dessus de quatre de ses niches, des inscriptions tracées à la pointe sur le stuc formant le revêtement…" (Delattre 1895, 23).

Not only had previous explorers removed artifacts from the burial space, but local people were also mining the burial complex and its artifacts for chalk.[15]

After the orphans' and Lavigerie's initial explorations of the spot, Père Beulé was directed to begin excavation of the area. Beulé provided selective accounts of the excavation's daily progress. Over the following ten years, Delattre commissioned additional excavations of the burial complex. While he was absent from the site, he left to other junior members of the clergy the tasks of excavating and collecting data. For such reasons, some of Delattre's records consist entirely of second-hand quotations from the monks to whom he had assigned these duties.[16] What exactly occurred in these excavations, what decisions were made by those digging, what materials were destroyed, or from where they were found, remained elusive even to Delattre. Objects disappeared soon after they were discovered. Their stratigraphy was not recorded and the artifacts were permanently lost.[17]

Despite their pronounced interests in Roman, Christian, and religious antiquity, furthermore, neither the Pères Blancs nor their disciples had been trained as archaeologists: young missionaries were taught theology, not the pragmatics of excavation. Delattre's description of the initial forays of the young missionaries attests to how "les jeunes

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[15] In September 2003, at the Carthage Museum, I was told that many of the Gammarth artifacts had been destroyed after their discovery. The understanding that this region was a "Jewish" one and the presence of some menorot on some of the artifacts, has apparently encouraged damage to some of these materials. In other cases, political conflict accidentally precipitated the destruction of Jewish archaeological evidence. Catacombs that were initially documented in the late 1920s in Oea, Tripoli (Bartoccini 1928–1929), were actually bombed during World War II. These are only a sample of those sites and artifacts which have been eradicated from the archaeological record by war and political events.

[16] One small pamphlet of Delattre reflects this—it consists of a letter from a monk, quoted in its entirety (1904). This monk mentions the findings of others and Delattre comments on these discoveries remotely (1904, 1–8).

[17] Delattre depicted drawings of some of the finds in his 1895 monograph, but it is unclear who uncovered them, who drew them, when, and why (1895, 17–60). The present locations of most of these artifacts are unknown.

missionaires, en quête d'exercises récréatifs . . . avaient pris à tâche d'explorer la nécropole. . . . S'aidant ses mains, des pieds, et des genoux, ils pénétraient dans les hypogées, visitant ceux qui étaient déjà connus et en explorant de nouveaux" (1895, 24). Delattre describes such a method of excavation as a comical sight. The result of this method had an opposite effect—by the time of Ferron's excavations in the 1940s and 1950s, very little within the catacombs had been left in its original array.

The effects of this incremental and unrecorded exploration are clear. Lack of stratigraphy and corruption of finds destroys artifacts' utility for analysis. And the loss of the majority of these artifacts either at the site or within the collections of museums further detracts from understandings of the burial complex. Many questions can never be answered. It is impossible to know how artifacts were originally positioned or clustered, at what levels, and whether inscriptions with clear Christian connotations (*e.g.*, Le Bohec no. 54) originally derived from this burial complex or whether they were situated according to their secondary use.

Implicit hierarchies of finds additionally informed what artifacts were recorded and whether they were noted in the archaeological reports. Sparse records remain from the series of excavations of the burial complex. Earlier explorers only recorded those finds that appeared more valuable, such as inscriptions.[18] Disinterest in finds considered quotidian, such as bare terracotta tiles and storage jars, also deterred their documentation in texts, drawings and photographs. Finally, artifacts were lost or removed according to anticipated market value. The artifacts that seemed most noteworthy to the French or Italians were shipped off to the Louvre, to the museums of Rome, or for sale in the major cities of Europe.[19] Those remaining in North African museums

[18] Only during later periods did Père Ferron photograph more thoroughly some of the goods found within the tombs. By that time, most of the artifacts that were not already measured or identified were destroyed, or lost within the Carthage Museum (Williams 1937, 457). Many of the grave goods from Gammarth, which consisted of undecorated ceramic amphorae and unguentaria, remained largely neglected in evaluations of the site. Some are documented in one footnote (Ferron 1956, n.3; pl. IV). Although Ferron describes some of these, he cannot account for many of their original placements. Most of them were discovered in secondary contexts; previous explorers and excavators had disturbed their original situations. Additionally, such artifacts, which were considered unexceptional to museum officials, are now lost—along with more distinct possibilities for dating the catacombs.

[19] Some archaeologists even gifted some of the "duplicate" finds to their cities of origin (Gutron 2004, 3). Delattre shipped some of his favorite finds to Rouen, his hometown in France (Crogiez and Hottot 2000, 495).

were erratically catalogued and preserved. The resulting dispersal of finds prevents a more comprehensive understanding of the artifacts and their uses in original sites and contexts.

2. *Gammarth as a Prototype*

The excavation history at Gammarth, the absence of its records, and the disorganization and loss of its finds are traits unfortunately typical for all North African Jewish sites and artifacts. In all regions, early excavation of sites by untrained explorers curtailed the preservation and analysis of artifacts.[20] The isolated discoveries throughout North Africa of individual Jewish funerary markers and lamps have suffered similar fates. Many of these are lost in museum collections, remain uncatalogued in private collections, or have been destroyed completely. What is particularly problematic about all of these treatments of Jewish artifacts is that so few of them survive. Carelessness with Jewish artifacts impacts the corpus of Jewish materials to a much greater degree than it does evidence for other North African populations. Excavation at important Jewish sites has resulted in destruction and incomplete archaeological records that are intrinsically and pervasively defective and diffuse. These processes result in collections of data that inaccurately represent artifacts' original distributions and contexts.

II. "Jews," "Jewish" Inscriptions, and Data Creation

While the erratic nature of the material record and the data collection for African Jewish artifacts might more obviously limit their analysis, other methodological problems have beset artifacts' study in equivalent ways. Presumptions about the indentifiability of Jewish archaeological materials, their classification, the relationship between the materials and the individuals who commissioned them, and about the relationships between Jews to others in their societies also implicitly have shaped treatments of this archaeological evidence.

[20] The extraction of materials from the site of the synagogue at Hammam Lif, the subsequent destruction of the site, and the dispersal of its artifacts furnishes a comparably sad tale. See also discussion in chapter five.

A. *Corpus Creation as Data Creation*

Both Hirschberg's and Le Bohec's collections of data have served to make more accessible inscriptions and artifacts that relate to North African Jewish populations. Scholars without particular knowledge of ancient North Africa consult these corpora for quick references and discussions of Jews of the southern Mediterranean. Large portions of Hirschberg's and Le Bohec's compendia depend on previous studies of Jewish inscriptions by some of the most well-respected scholars of the twentieth century, such as Paul Monceaux and Louis Robert. Unfortunately, the esteem in which historians and epigraphers have held these fine scholars has permitted their older conclusions to remain above modern scrutiny and to continue to shape an African "Jewish" corpus.

1. *Lack of Definition of Corpus*

Two problems endemic to previous studies of North African Jewish materials relate both to the absence of scholars' definitions of "Jews," "Judaism," and "Jewishness," and to simultaneous assumptions about what Jewish materials *should* look like. These difficulties, in turn, relate to common perceptions that "Jewishness" of archaeological materials is so obvious and fixed that it need not be defined or circumscribed.[21] The omission of criteria for "Jewishness" bears distinct ramifications: rarely is it clear why particular objects are included in collections of Jewish materials and why other artifacts have been excluded. Unarticulated methodologies for the collection of Jewish corpora have permitted material evidence of questionable cultural provenance to be considered as "Jewish."

[21] See Schwartz's discussion of scholars' presumptions about the identifiability of Jewish materials and the intrinsic "groupness" within Judaism (2001, 5). The most recent evaluations of African "Jewish" and "Judaizing" materials exhibit the general tendencies Schwertz critiques; Le Bohec, for example, does not detail precisely what qualifies an artifact or inscription as "Jewish" or "Judaizing" and how such differences might be meaningfully discerned. Some edited collections of Jewish materials from other regions, such as Rome, do clearly articulate their parameters. See Noy (1995).

2. *Inscriptions and Jewish "Sentiment": A Commemorative Example*

At first glance, for example, Le Bohec's inscriptions nos. 9, 10, and 11 appear to provide rich information that is useful for the discussion of North African Jewish naming practices, social status, and operative understandings of Jewish theology and theodicy. Le Bohec includes these texts in his corpus because of his trust in Monceaux's epigraphic work. In his 1902 study, Monceaux classified these epitaphs as of "païens-judaïsants" and described how this collection of three inscriptions had been discovered in a single hypogeum in Henchir Djouana, Algeria (1902). Monceaux (1902, 211) transcribed the first text to read:

> *Parentes dicunt: Aeheeu! Miseros nos et infelices, qui duo lumina tam c[l]ara perdidimus! Se[d] quid aliu[d] fieri potest nisi naturae ser viendum? Se[d] veniet utique vindex ille noster dies,| ut securi et expertes mali jaceamus. Si pariter, so|pietur dolor; si seperatim, maior cruciatus super|stiti relinquetur. Cupidi tamen sumus morti[s], ut | in illum puriorem secessum profugiamus. | Homines enim quo innocentiores, eo infeliciores*.[22]

Two other epitaphs accompanied this one. These include one which reads: *DMS. | P. Aurelius Felicianus | h(ic) s(itus) e(st). Vixit an(nis) XVIIII m(ensibus)* VIII; *Parentes, erudito et piisi|mo filio fecerunt* (*CIL* 8. 23243), and a joint epitaph: *[Dis] M(anibus) S[acrum] Aurelius For|[t]unatus h(ic) s(itus) est. | Vixit pie | annis XXX F(ilius) p(osuit) or F(rater)*, and *[Dis Manibus] S(acrum) Q. Aureli|us Satur|ninus vi|xit annis* | LXXVIII (*CIL* 8.23244).

Monceaux's classification of the latter texts as of "païens-judaïsants" depends on a series of assumptions about their relationship to the idiosyncratic first inscription. To Monceaux, the names within the second two epitaphs in the catacomb were of definitive Roman African context and commemorated the parents of the lamented child of the first epitaph. The proper Roman North African structure of the parent's *tria nomina*, the indication of their family relationship, and their positioning within the same hypogeum, led Monceaux to believe that these people were uniformly of "pagan" origin (1990, 212).

Yet four of the first inscription's aspects remained "anormales" to Monceaux: its signification of *parentes dicunt* (l. 1), *veniet utique vindex ille*

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[22] Monceaux's translation reads, "Hélas! malheureux que nous sommes! Infortunés qui avons perdu deux lumières si éclatantes! Mais que peut-on faire, sinon obéir à la nature? Mais il viendra en tout cas, pour nous, ce jour vengeur, a fin que nous reposions en sécurité et à l'abri du mal. Si nous mourons ensembles, notre doleur sera apaisée…les hommes, en effet, plus ils sont innocent, plus ils sont malheureux" (1902, 211).

noster dies (l. 4), *in illum puriorem secessum* (l. 8), *quo innocentiores, eo infeliciores* (l. 9) (1902, 212).[23] Monceaux states that these phrases are not only "anormales," but that "ces formulas nous paraissent contredire les idées païennes"(1902, 215). Because Monceaux argues that Christians frequently retained the normal expressions of their pagan environment, he views these deviations as deriving from Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament ("L'idée de *vindex dies* est toute juive"; 1902, 215). His mention of one Jewish text from Venosa which also refers to parents in the plural, this poem's possession of an "air of lamentation" akin to that expressed in texts of *Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Job*, and the biblical prophets, and its protestations against injustice (cf. *Isaiah* 57:1–2) all point to Jewish ideologies (1902, 220).[24] He therefore concludes: "Le mausolée et les épitaphs d'Henchir Djouana étant touts païens d'apparence le thrène n'aurait pu être composé que par un judaïsant" (1902, 223). These reasons alone justify Monceaux's suggestion that this cluster of inscriptions is of Jewish context. Though Monceaux does not identify the texts as of actual Jews, he uses them as proofs of "une infiltration au doctrines judaïsantes" (1902, 223).

Even contemporaneous studies of pan-Mediterranean culture and philosophy, however, indicate that Monceaux's original determination that this funerary "carmen" is Jewish is highly suspect.[25] As Cumont originally asserted, these epitaphs are *not* regionally exceptional (1916, 9, n. 4).[26] The inscriptions, which are probably from the late second or early third century C.E., express sentiments common within other funerary poems of similar date in the region. They might exemplify

[23] Monceaux adds, "On doit donc se demander si cet accent pessimiste, cette sourde rancune contre le monde, cette protestation contre l'injustice, cet espoire d'une vengeance et d'une réparation, ne trahissent pointe une infiltration d'idées étrangères au paganisme, en un mot l'influence d'une autre religion" (1902, 215).

[24] Another of Monceaux's arguments for this link includes his mention that there exists between the modern cities of Sufes and Djebel-Trozza a place called Henchir Ioudia (1902; 217; cf. Tissot and Reinach 1884, II, 630).

[25] Subsequent studies, such as those produced by Hirschberg, Le Bohec, and others, have depended upon these previous analyses and chronologies. Even North African Roman archaeologists and epigraphists have maintained these dates (Ben Abdallah 1986), as they consider others to have greater expertise with Jewish archaeological materials. As a result, these findings and chronologies are ossified as part of the corpus.

[26] Cumont notes, "Je doute cependant beaucoup que l'inscription d'Henchir Djaona commentée dans cet article soit judaisante. L'expression *naturae serviendum* est stoicienne et le *vindex dies* est le jour de la libération opposé à cette servitude. Les idées exprimées ici me semblent se rattacher à celles qui apparaissent sur une groupe d'autres épitaphes païennes d'Afriques" (1916, 9, n. 4).

the diffusion of popular stoic philosophies throughout the ancient Mediterranean that are also reflected in certain early Jewish wisdom texts. Yet these North African texts do not suggest a particularly Jewish association; they should not be within a Jewish corpus at all. [27]

Subsequent generations of scholarship, however, have depended on the cultural diagnosis of Monceaux *via* Hirschberg and Le Bohec. Hirschberg cites these texts as commemorating individuals who were the types of Judaizers Christian authors describe (1974, 82), while Le Bohec unquestioningly preserves this text in his corpus of Jewish and Judaizing inscriptions (1981, 175, nos. 9–11).

These "Jewish" inscriptions, too, have inspired ranging types of analysis within subsequent work. For example, the classical *tria nomina* form of the names supports an analysis of how Jewish naming practices overlapped significantly with Roman African ones (Le Bohec 1981b, 213). But the names do not appear to be of Jews (or of "Judaizing pagans") at all. Subsequent conclusions about the inscriptions' onomastic components and their broader contribution to discussions of North African Jewish history, therefore, are actually erroneous. And though these are but three inscriptions within Le Bohec's collection, their unproblematic inclusion in his corpus has possessed broader consequences within scholarship, which extend beyond the borders of North Africa. The "Jewish" context of these texts has been used to support different arguments about Judaism throughout the Mediterranean: they have been cited in discussions about Roman and Jewish "acculturation" and about the presence of "pagan markers" within Jewish epitaphs.[28] The use of these texts to support such conclusions and their implications is misleading and representative of the broader problems that result from inaccuracies in pre-existing corpora. An unfortunate and uncharacteristic error by Monceaux, then, has sustained a prolonged though unjustified lineage.

[27] Some of these inscriptions that have been falsely labeled as "Judaising" in Le Bohec's collection are integrated into general discussions of Jewish *Dis Manibus* inscriptions (Kraemer 1991; 156; Rutgers 1995, 271–272). It is important to note that the conclusions scholars have drawn from the "Jewish" aspects of these texts are not necessarily wrong, in fact, some of the arguments made on their basis resemble those I make within this book. Rather, the problem with the texts' inclusion in Le Bohec's corpus is that they lead, inevitably, to some false data for subsequent analysis.

[28] Discussions in Rutgers (1995, 272) and Kraemer (1991) incorporate some of these evaluations.

3. *Occluded Jewish Corpora*

Modern scholars' trust in previous corpora has yielded chains of misinformed analysis of some African "Jewish" materials. The reasons for this are unsurprising: it is easy for not-quite-Jewish inscriptions to be included in corpora whose parameters are not circumscribed. By resisting the description of what would constitute a collection's "Jewish" and "Judaising" classifications, scholars invite others' dependency on a wide range of studies with antiquated methodologies. In addition to the challenges imposed by erratic excavation and artifact preservation and loss, scholars of ancient Judaism and North African Judaism and Christianity must consult corpora governed by unarticulated methodologies and questionable collections of artifacts.

Most scholars of ancient religion are textual specialists, not archaeologists: they must trust in others' archaeological collections to garner information for their own analysis. The various ways in which data for North African Jews have been corrupted, then, influence scholarship surreptitiously in multiple additional ways. These data, as they stand, are neither scientific nor objective. They are the product of colonial and religious interests, accidents of preservation, and selective attention. Even the corpora that assemble the data require excavation—not all previous scholarship on Jewish evidence is to be trusted. Past and contemporary scholars' methods of classifying materials as "Jewish" are frequently wrong and misleading. An improved approach to the Jewish materials acknowledges that certain of these contingencies are now embedded within the data, but that others remain correctable. By noticing the exact ways certain data are *inaccurate*, one can begin to assess them more honestly and with greater confidence.

B. *Must Jews Stand Alone? Jews and the Problem of Uniqueness*

Presumptions that Jews have always been "culturally separate" have also subtly informed analyses of the African data from both Jewish and Christian perspectives. The consistent way the Jewish materials of the Roman period have been considered as external to their African context, therefore, exhibits an approach common within studies of other Jewish populations in antiquity. Such tendencies emphasize the continuity of Jewish cultural lineages and assume an intrinsic separation between the cultures of ancient Jews and those of their neighbors. They consider the material evidence for them accordingly; scholars have

traditionally assumed that foreign "Jewish" texts or archaeology would be more relevant for the interpretation of African Jewish artifacts than would local non-Jewish ones.

In *A History of the Jews in North Africa from Antiquity to the Present*, H.Z. Hirschberg's brief discussion of the interpretation of the Jewish evidence demonstrates such common presumptions:

> The meagerness of Jewish historical sources on the North African dispersion for the period we are dealing with makes it extremely difficult to trace the course of events and draw reliable conclusions. The task is similar to the restoration of a mosaic from which many stones are missing. But while such a mosaic discovered in a Roman villa may be reconstructed by reference to better-preserved specimens, how are we to reconstruct a complete picture of African Jewry, which was unique of its kind and whose epigraphic and archaeological vestiges are few and, moreover, unequal in historical value and scattered over a vast area and a period of a thousand years? Not a single spiritual creation of African Jewry during that period has come down to us to enlighten us on its peculiarities. The information contained in contemporary Palestinian literature is likewise extremely scanty. Any reconstruction, therefore, must rely on secondary sources. In the absence of Jewish documents, we have to fill in essential details from Gentile accounts, which describe events and conditions from their point of view. An important domain like religious and spiritual life—particularly open to the impact of emotions—must be viewed in part in negative pictures, as it were: through polemics and discussions in hostile writings by representatives of a religion that strove to eliminate Judaism.
>
> (Hirschberg 1974, 21, 23)

Hirschberg's scholarship is detailed and extensive and he carefully approaches evidence for Jewish culture in North Africa from antiquity to the present. The majority of his assessment of the state of the evidence for North African Jews is appropriately cautious and accords with more responsible approaches to contemporaneous Christian literary texts. His perspective, furthermore, relates to his thesis about the uniformity and continuity of Jewish traditions in North Africa; his two volume study emphasizes broader diachronic developments among Jewish populations in the region and is directed less toward the investigation of specific Jewish cultural manifestations in the late ancient period.[29]

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[29] Hirschberg describes a "diaspora [which] has been treated as a backwater of cultural history" from antiquity to the present (1974, 9). His central concern in treating Jews of the Roman period is to indicate the degree to which Jews of that and subsequent periods founded later Maghrebi Jewish culture (1974, 10). While he wishes to address the antiquity of the population and its significance in the history of North

The metaphor of the incomplete mosaic that Hirschberg uses to describe the difficulty of *interpreting* the ancient Jewish evidence, best illustrates why his and others' analyses of the materials cannot progress. It illuminates the central assumptions, objectives, and methods that are implicit in Hirschberg's and others' works on the history of North African Jews—Jewish literary or archaeological materials can only be explained through other Jewish evidence.[30]

This approach curtails the process of analysis because it has deprived scholarship of the possibility to use local evidence to interpret Jewish artifacts.[31] Hirschberg is stymied by the absence of local, "better-preserved" Jewish specimens to help interpret the extant Jewish materials. He regrets the lack of contemporaneous Palestinian comparanda, which he assumes would be the second most appropriate instrument with which to interpret the North African evidence. As ancient North African Judaism is presumed to be cohesive across space and time, but "unique" among its pagan and Christian neighbors, so too is the archaeological evidence that attests to it. The fundamental incomparability of this Jewish archaeological evidence is assumed to be part of the definition of what Judaism is. Material evidence for Jews in North Africa is necessarily isolated, because the artifacts of the Jews' neighbors are regarded as having no bearing on the Jewish materials themselves.

These presumptions about the exclusiveness of the category of "Jew" and its incompatibility with other identifications also remain common within traditional scholarship of early Judaism and Christianity. Many scholars posit an intrinsic "uniqueness" to Jewish populations that has practical ramifications—it renders Jewish archaeological evidence locally incomparable and uninterpretable.[32] According to such a position,

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Africa, his study of ancient populations principally serves to found this assertion—the Roman period Jewish population is discussed to demonstrate the antiquity of the Jewish lineage on the African continent.

[30] I will only address here the methods he employs in his introduction, and the one chapter he uses to address ancient Jewish materials in the "Greco-Roman Orbit" (Hirschberg 1974, 1–86).

[31] Making such presumptions about the incomparability of the Jewish populations abstracts this evidence, implying that Jewish culture transcends that of its worldly environment and is essentially the same as all other Jewish cultures in the ancient Mediterranean.

[32] J.Z. Smith helpfully characterizes this impulse to understand Jewish and Christian religions and cultures as "unique" (1990, 37). He describes how "'Unique' becomes an ontological rather than a taxonomic category; an assertion of a radical difference so absolute that it becomes 'Wholly Other,' whereby the act of comparison is perceived as both an impossibility and an impiety" (1990, 38).

scholars might look to occasional references to Africa in the Palestinian Talmud, rely on foreign Jewish archaeological materials to interpret the North African Jewish ones, or interpret specific artifacts using the texts of Babylonian rabbis; these Jewish sources are assumed to be more internal to North African Jewish material culture than neighboring North African artifacts might be (Le Bohec 1981, 166).[33] Hirschberg's and others' assumptions that the "mosaic" of Jewish culture is a unique one, which cannot be compared to local antecedents, prevents the possibility of using local models to interpret Jewish artifacts.

As Hirschberg might even acknowledge, the metaphor he uses to support this position is as literally false as it is methodologically untenable in North Africa. Jewish mosaics from North Africa are certainly comparable to those of their neighbors: as I describe in chapter five, the figurative mosaics preserved from the sixth-century African synagogue of Hammam Lif are nearly identical to those found within nearby Roman villas and Christian basilicas (Duval 1974). Other North African archaeological evidence, furthermore, bears many more similarities to the Jewish artifacts at Hammam Lif than Hirschberg's metaphor would permit. This comparability itself yields a possible solution to the stone-wall problem with evidence for North African Jews: perhaps the key to "filling in" the spotty material evidence for this group is to look to *local* cultural analogy, rather than to turn immediately to foreign texts and archaeological materials. Scholars' views of North African Jewish materials as geographically and culturally transcendent reinforce the artifacts' inaccessibility, isolation, and opacity.

C. *Taxonomy as Tautology*

The method chosen to organize archaeological materials also impacts the interpretation of the available data. Frequently, scholars use typologies furnished by contemporaneous and culturally internal individuals and

[33] Various rabbis from Carthage, such as "Hanan of Kartigna" and "Aha of Kartigna" are mentioned in the tales told by other rabbis (*e.g.*, *b. Ketubot* 27b; *b. Baba Qamma* 114b). Such stories, however, furnish little information about Africa itself and align more closely with stylized genres of rabbinic literature and Hellenistic literary travel genres. As Rives comments with respect to the interpretation of rabbinic sources on African Jewish populations, "the difficulties for a historian [with respect to rabbinical sources] are obvious (1995, 219, n. 98).

groups to organize the study of "religious" archaeological evidence.[34] In this regard, those interested in Roman North African Jews have found themselves in a particular predicament. No rabbinic texts sufficiently treat the population.[35] Appian, Apuleius, and Procopius appear to have ignored North African Jews entirely. Such oversights have forced scholars' complete dependence on Christian literary sources—the only local African texts that make mention of Jews—to classify and analyze the Jewish materials (Hirschberg 1974, 23).

1. *Use of Christian Literature*

The move toward Christian literature initially appears to be a most responsible one. In the apparent absence of other options, the application of ancient African Christian typologies for the organization and interpretation of North African Jewish material evidence seems necessary and acceptable. Placing Jewish evidence in categories that correspond to those that African Christian writers call "Jewish," "Judaizing Christian," "Christianizing Jewish," or even "Middle Jewish" behaviors seems initially beneficial. This approach employs descriptive categories to organize the Jewish evidence. These categories might admittedly derive from Christian texts, but they appear to be more helpful than a complete lack of organization, and they assist an interpretation of the gradations of behavior that inscriptions, lamps, and burial archaeology might signify.[36]

Scholars have not made these moves without reticence—recent studies of North African Christianity have argued that Christian categories for Jews are often opaque and primarily used as polemical tools in intra-Christian debate (Fredriksen 1995, 229–230; Efroyomson 1999; Wilson 1995, 144), because Christian reports of North African Jews are usually limited to discussions of Jews' theological inadequacies and how Jewish

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[34] Barnes' suggestion that extant evidence for North African Jews cannot support much analysis relates to his admission of the obscurity of the relationship between the church fathers' polemical references to Jews and the scattered nature of the material evidence for Jewish groups (1971, 284).

[35] General references to language in Africa and indirect accounts of rabbis who originated in Carthage furnish no information to improve an understanding of a rabbinic connection with Jewish communities in Africa, *e.g.*, *b. Berakot* 29a // *Y. Berakot* iv. 3); *b. Baba Qamma* 114b; *y. Šabbat* xvi.2 // *y. Beṣah* i.6. For discussion, see Rives (1995, 220). None of these texts describe Jewish daily life in African territories.

[36] A helpful discussion of these terms, their developments and their uses is described within Cohen (1998, 178).

activities are antithetical to their own (Lieu 1992, 4). Despite scholars' outlines of the limitations of the Christian texts for historical enquiry, however, no other option has remained apparent. By default, studies have continued to depend on Christian texts to organize archaeological data to interpret behaviors of North African Jews. While responsible scholars have acknowledged the difficulties of using Christian texts *vis-à-vis* the Jewish materials, they warily adopt Christian writers' typologies and descriptions of Jewish culture to create frameworks through which to interpret material evidence for Jews' relationships to contemporaneous Christians (Frend 1970; Scholer 1982; Setzer 1997).[37]

2. *Rationalizing the Use of Christian Taxonomies*

Three arguments are proffered to justify the use of Christian texts to explicate archaeological materials. First, some assert that particular aspects of local Christian writings can be used to understand Christian *realia* (Wilson 1995).[38] North African Jews, in this case, constitute one aspect of North African Christian *realia* and thus Christian texts are justifiably germane to their interpretation. Second, as S.G. Wilson has argued, applying ancient Christian categories to ancient evidence can be responsible. As ancients developed categories to describe and classify their world, it remains most appropriate for modern scholars to maintain their nomenclature (1995, 160–161). Last, others argue that the possibility of identifying and applying Christian "neutral," rather than polemical categories, might more accurately inform an analysis of Jewish materials. Each of these arguments is misleading: a brief review of their application to the North African Jewish materials demonstrates why.

[37] Such patterns are most anticipated in scholars' address of relationships between Christian writers and the Jews (Aziza 1977; Frend 1970; Barnes 1971). Likewise, the earliest works of Delattre (1895), Ferron (1951; 1956) and even Hirschberg (1974, 71) respond to the cultural suggestions Christian writers impose. While scholars have noted the obscurity of Christian discussions of Jews, they continue to both frame the Jewish evidence and interpret it according to the same polemical traditions.

[38] Wilson agrees with others who acknowledge the limitations of Christian literary sources for the investigation of North African Jews and Jewish culture (Bobertz 1991, 1–2; Fredriksen 1995, 300) and states that "the reports of the church fathers have been subjected to… scrutiny. It is known that they write with polemical intent, copy one another verbatim, conflate their sources, use false analogies, and confuse contemporary with ancient information" (Wilson 1995, 144).

At first glance, the first two suggestions about using Christian texts to decipher Jewish archaeology appear sound. After all, as Wilson has noted, perhaps it remains appropriate for scholars to maintain ancient categories, whatever their origin, for the analysis of contemporaneous groups (1995, 160–161). Scholars have thus defended their use of the words of North African authors such as Commodian, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine to circumscribe the Jewish archaeological and epigraphic record, and, in turn, to govern their resulting interpretations of artifacts in order to describe the cultural relationship between African Jews and Christians.

3. *Impossibilities of "Neutrality": An Example from Commodian*

A review of one of the analytical categories supplied by North African Christian writers quickly demonstrates why applying such taxonomies to Jews and Jewish evidence might be more problematic than Wilson initially describes. One example of this derives from a text of Commodian, whose terminology for Jews has recently been considered to be "neutral" and, therefore, more useful in the classification of Jewish materials.[39] Writing in the third to fourth centuries, Commodian uses one tractate to describe practices of specific types of deviants within North African society—those who are *inter utrumque viventibus*, or, those who live between the poles of paganism, Judaism, and Christianity (*Instruct.* col. 0219a, CSEL 15.49).[40] These include "pagans," who may concurrently participate in "gentile" and "Christian" practices, or others who occupy intermediate ranges of pagan, Jewish, and Christian practice and include the "medius Iudaeus"—the "middle/half-Jew"—the type of Christian who acts like a Jew, or the type of Jew who acts like a Christian (Setzer 1997, 192, 197). Among scholars of North African

[39] Whether particular authors, such as Commodian, were *actually* North African matters less in this case. Only scholars' choices to use of these texts and terminologies are relevant here. See Setzer's related critique (1997, 190, 198).

[40] Scholars frequently date Commodian's writings to the late third and early fourth centuries. On the dating of Commodian's texts see Thraede (1959) and Daniélou (1977, 100). Still others have debated Commodian's origin. Some have ascribed his origins to North Africa, while others have suggested Syria as his place of origin. Scarce information exists about this writer, but his works have been preserved in two poems, the *Carmina* and *Instructiones*. The prevailing argument remains that he was a pagan North African who entered Christianity by way of Judaism (Daniélou 1977), but more recent assessments of Commodian's origins are based on other aspects of his writing and background.

Christianity, Commodian's term "medius Iudaeus" has been considered a useful one—it does not appear to be overly pejorative and can be used to neutrally classify materials that appear to exhibit traits of both Jewish and Christian association.

In one acrostic tractate, "Qui Iudaeidiant fanatici," Commodian describes such groups. He asks, "Quid? medius Iudaeus, medius vis esse profanus? Unde non effugies judicium Christi defunctus. . . . In totum erratis si Deum et fana colatis!" (XXXVII cols A, B; "What?! Are you a half Jew? Would you be half profane?! Once dead, to where will you not flee the judgment of Christ? . . . You are entirely in error, if you approach both God and [pagan] temples." This passage precedes three others (XXXVIII–XL) that reproduce more traditional *Contra Iudaeus* diatribes against Jews. In this passage, however, the accusations are, more unusually, set against Jews who allegedly pursue God halfway and "profane" themselves in the process.[41] But Commodian's criticism of the Jewish "fanatics" is that they are simultaneously attracted to "Deum" and enact their convocations at *fana*, pagan places of devotion. A middle Jew, here, is one who mixes places of worship. Yet Commodian makes no mention here of synagogues—the buildings to which one would expect reference if the offenders in question were attracted to both Judaism and Christianity. This oddity adds to the sense that Commodian's "medius Iudaeus" is not a meaningful or neutral description that might furnish a productive taxonomy for the analysis of Jewish material evidence. Rather, it is a categorical slander of all that is not appropriately Christian—it describes one who inappropriately conflates categories of devotional practice.

Though scholars have argued that the adoption of this category of "medius Iudaeus" might provide an accurate and contemporaneous language to describe the range of practices some North African Jews may have sustained, this category remains intrinsically polemical; would a person who worshipped at both churches and temples, or at both synagogues and churches, have considered herself "media" and doomed in the *iudicium Christi*? More than likely, that person would not have viewed herself as "media," but would have regarded herself as fully something, which Christian authors would not care to encapsulate.

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[41] Of course, the sense of God (*Deum*) here is entirely obscure. For discussion of related difficulties of determining singularities and multiplicities of deity, see Fredriksen (2003). Consideration of Commodian and his context is found in Daniélou (1977, 263).

Terms such as those of Commodian, despite their antiquity, cannot be considered to more productively characterize Jewish practices or organize Jewish materials. Commodian's characterization of a Jew as *medius* is remote to the experience of the one whom he classifies. It serves to circumscribe an orthodox Christian "center" as opposed to its "periphery"—a map so important to Christian writers.[42] Just because a term like *medius Iudaeus* is contemporaneous to a Roman period Jewish population does not mean the category is a useful one, or is *internal* to that population.[43]

4. *Analytical Categories or Literary Slanders? Describing Jews, Jewish Christians and Christian Jews*

The adoption of other ancient Christian categories to analyze Jewish materials has been defended in comparable ways. Recent studies of North African Jews and their archaeological evidence admit the pervasive "negativity" within Christian nomenclature for Jews, but respond by choosing other more "neutral" (as opposed to "rancorous") terms of Christian authors to classify evidence for "Jews," "Judaizing Christians," "Christianizing Jews," and "Middle Jews." Claudia Setzer's article on "Jews, Jewish Christians, and Judaizers in North Africa" adopts this approach (1997). These categories outline a range of literary and material evidence for manifestations of Judaism in the southwestern Mediterranean. Setzer is careful to provide definitions for each permutation of the Jewish groups she analyzes.[44] She borrows the definitions for these groups from S.G. Wilson, who employs ancient Christian taxonomies for "Jews," "Jewish Christians," and "Christian-

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[42] Concerning Christian orthodoxy and its development of polarizing maps of Christian periphery and center, see Boyarin (1999, 16–26; 2005).

[43] In certain instances, such terms are entirely acceptable and desirable in the modern world, if not necessarily in the ancient one. Michael Satlow has helpfully directed me to the web site www.HalfJew.com. Such a concept of "half Jew" appears desirable and conceivable in the modern world, but it is unclear whether it would have been in the ancient one.

[44] Setzer replaces conventional pejorative categories for Jewish evidence with explicitly defined categories of "Jew" ("people distinguished by Jewish birth or conversion, who identify themselves as Jews, and who do not see themselves as having any other religious loyalties") with "Jewish Christians" and "Jewish Identifiers," equivalent to the pejorative designation of Judaizer (*i.e.*, "Christians who are not Jews and have no ambitions to be Jews or take on Jewish practices, but who stress the Jewish elements and origins of Christianity. They struggle with the challenge of early Christian theology to affirm Christianity's roots in Judaism, while freeing itself from Judaism" 1997, 186, 198).

izing Jews" in his own work to interpret diversities of ancient Jewish belief and practice (1995).

Setzer's method is responsible and explicit. She juxtaposes African Christian textual descriptions of Jews with the exploration of Jewish inscriptions and artifacts to demonstrate ranges of behaviors exhibited by Jewish populations in the region (1997, 192). When she examines epigraphic evidence for "Jewish Christians" in North Africa, for example, she clearly defines what such a designation intends; she adopts Wilson's understanding of a Jewish Christian as "someone who is Jewish by birth or conversion, whose self-identification and practice are Jewish, who believes in Jesus, and whose belief in Jesus and Christology are rooted in Jewish belief" (1997, 192). She uses one inscription, discovered in the region of Damitous al-Karita, in Carthage, to demonstrate a possible manifestation of this category (Le Bohec no. 18).[45] Setzer states that because this epitaph (Ferron 1951, 184) was discovered within a basilica, it would commemorate a Jew who possessed a close relationship to the Christians who worshipped within the building. The commemorated Annianos, like others in the Mediterranean, may have been a specific type of Jewish Christian variant in antiquity.[46] But are categories such as "Jewish Christian" actually helpful in the analysis of this and other inscriptions? Does this manner of labeling artifacts contribute to an improved understanding of the cultural context of the deceased or his commemorator? Is the application of the term "Jewish Christian" to objects as "neutral" a classification as it might initially appear? Is it appropriate to label an object as "Jewish Christian," and to extend the label to the individual it commemorates (1997, 192)? Finally, what are the broader implications of this method of labeling an artifact? A

[45] The restoration of this text is depicted in Ferron (1951, pl. III, 186). Setzer also cites an inscription from Gammarth reconstructed by Delattre to read: "NIS . . . /Fortunatia b [L]ocus/ [. . . a]edis u[b]I <e> sunt/[beati ste]fani marturi/ [ossa et ?] filius," (Fortunatia . . . place of the shrine where [the bones and ?] of the blessed Stephen the martyr, son" as of similar "Jewish Christian" classification (*CIL* 8. 14 100; 1997, 192–3).

[46] Additionally, the text was not discovered within the basilica itself. It was found in the lowest stratum of a burial complex, which was reused in antiquity (Delattre 1884, 572). And though the category of "Jewish Christian" might bear a more positive valence than its slanderous "Judaizing" counterpart, it possesses an equally polemical history and interpretation. Le Bohec's stipulation that this inscription originated in Gammarth is incorrect; so too is Setzer's suggestion that this was found inside the basilica at Damitous al-Karita. It appears to have been found beneath the basilica stratum, rather than within it (Ferron 1951, 184; also oral communication with Mme. Ennabli, September 2003).

review of Setzer's and Wilson's concordant taxonomies suggests answers to some of these questions.

In *Related Strangers*, Wilson defines the category "Jewish Christian" clearly. He describes the origins of the development of the term by outlining the texts where the practices and behaviors of "Jewish Christians" are detailed. These are primarily included within texts of Pella traditions as recorded by Eusebius, Irenaeus, and Epiphanius (1995, 145). In these texts, according to Wilson, Jewish Christians fell into three distinct groupings, which accorded with distinct traditions of the Ebionites, Jacobites, and Nazarenes (1995, 148). He provides brief taxonomies of each of these groups, based on Christian literary attestations of them through the end of the second century.[47] He describes how these writers, furthermore, used their texts and nomenclatures for specific purposes; they developed terms such as "Jewish Christian" to separate the "heresies" of others from their own appropriate Christian "orthodoxy." Setzer's categories of analysis extend from Wilson's and derive from these eastern Mediterranean Christian polemical texts. Can terminologies of such foreign Christian writers fairly characterize the Jewish material evidence from North African territories?

Application of such typologies to material evidence, then, highlights an additional problem: they emulate taxonomies Christian writers developed to describe the beliefs of those who commit heresy. Through the application of such terms to an artifact, such as Annanios's epitaph, one implies that the deceased or those who commemorated him sustained the beliefs that the category "Jewish Christian" describes (*e.g.*, "in Jesus, in a Christology rooted in Jewish belief"; 1997, 192). It remains difficult to discern from the placement of the epitaph the exact nature of Annianos's beliefs, or the Christology, or lack thereof, he may have sustained. A term like "Jewish Christian" appears to be categorically inappropriate, then, in a second way. Literary terms, which describe belief, appear to be ill-suited to organize and explain archaeological materials—beliefs are quite difficult (if not impossible) to discern from the archaeological record. Even when scholars redefine and "neutralize" Christian literary taxonomies, these categories ultimately remain unhelpful for the interpretation of Jews' beliefs, behaviors, and artifacts.

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[47] The practices of these specific groups even appear obscure within Christian writings (*e.g.*, Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.26.2; Justin *Dial.* 48; Origen *Cels.* 61; Wilson 1995, 149). See discussion of comparable categories in Wilson (1995, 148–168).

5. *Why Literary Terms are Problematic*

As the previous evaluations exemplify, the use of traditional literary categories to organize archaeological evidence and its examination is intrinsically problematic. Categories like "Jewish Christian" and "Middle Jew" emerge as nondescriptive and externally qualitative—they add few insights to interpretations of the practices of those whom epitaphs and artifacts commemorate. More importantly, however, they obscure alternative ways such artifacts might be analyzed. The use of Christian literary taxonomies creates a material record for North African Jews that looks surprisingly similar to the ways Christians described that population, but contributes little to an understanding of the materials themselves.

Ultimately, then, a chain of literary and taxonomic assumptions about Christianity and Judaism informs centuries of analysis of the materials and perpetuates a problematic circularity in their examination. Nearly all past analyses of the North African Jewish materials have implicitly (or explicitly) depended upon this ancient polemical Christian and modern scholarly gaze.[48] Only by noticing *why* Christian taxonomies are intrinsically problematic, and by reviewing how such taxonomies continue to distort the Jewish evidence, does it become clear why a new taxonomy for the materials is necessary.

III. Reassessment of Data and Methodology

The occlusions built into the archaeological record, into the corpora of Jewish materials, and into the approaches of previous scholars, have created an impasse for the study of Jewish populations of Roman North Africa. To this point, it has appeared that any attempts to analyze evidence for these populations are futile, because the archaeological record is messy and unruly. Possible means to reevaluate it appear few, as no Jewish texts can explain it and the organization of the evidence yields little improved interpretation of it. In the absence of additional discoveries, scholarship of this group has reached a dead end.

[48] The continued acceptability of such approaches reflects the degree to which ancient Christian literature continues to shape approaches to ancient Mediterranean religion itself. For discussion, see Frend (1999).

A. *Reconfiguration of Data*

A solution to this apparent problem relates less to the search for *new* information, but, rather, more to the application of a different method to the same old materials in a way that is sensitive to the problems of the previous studies. An improved approach must endeavor a better understanding of the state of the evidence itself and must liberate that evidence from the partial historical, rabbinic, and Christian literary categories that presently govern its analysis. Several steps will be taken to address each of these concerns to ameliorate the interpretation of the archaeological evidence.

1. *Clearing the Brush*

This introductory chapter represents a first step in a project to isolate a more accurate corpus. Contingencies of artifacts' discovery, preservation, and analysis artificially impose limits on discussions of African Jewish populations. In this book, I examine the accuracy of archaeological reports and museum catalogues and corpora that attest Jewish archaeological finds. Work that I have done in the field in Tunisia and Morocco and in museum collections in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States has encouraged this development of different methods of analysis to serve as a correction to previous understandings of the archaeological record. The complete reassessment of the context of the discovery and preservation of data is an important prerequisite to the ultimate reevaluation of the Jewish and non-Jewish materials. This first step of the project establishes the groundwork to challenge the data upon which previous studies have been based and to formulate different sets of questions about the archaeological materials.

2. *Measuring "Jewishness" and Identifying "Jewish" Artifacts*

In this study, I use the word "Jewish" to describe particular aspects of practices and objects—the adjective is not an all-encompassing one.[49] Scholars of Judaism in antiquity have traditionally focused on the

[49] Over the past decade, scholars have considered the variability of concept of *Iudaeus* in distinct times and places throughout the Mediterranean. Two of the more thorough examinations of these are found within Cohen (1998, 70–108), and Kraemer (1989).

singular expressions of "Jewish" identity, such that the application of the adjective *Iudaeus* evaluates the totality of a thing, an activity, or a person. Neither identity nor the practices that reflect it, however, are that simplistic: on the same day in the fourth century C.E., the same woman might identify herself as a "Jew" while entering a synagogue, as a "Roman" of the provinces when participating in Roman legal litigation, and as a "Punic-speaker," in the marketplace. As Theodore Schatzki describes, methods of identification can be varied, simultaneous, and alternate.[50] In this book, the use of the word "Jewish" takes these possibilities into account: it does not imply a presumed exclusiveness of identification or a singularity of action.[51] My use of the term "Jewish" to describe a practice, a symbol, or a language is not intended to serve as a comprehensive characterization of that thing, but is intended to label one feature (or set of features) of an activity or an object, specifically in relation to this study.

(a) Positive and Negative Criteria of "Jewishness"

Previous scholars have addressed the difficulties of identifying Jewish artifacts.[52] Ross Kraemer provides among the most thorough of these discussions and lists both "positive" and "negative" criteria whereby scholars have traditionally judged an inscription's "Jewishness" (1991, 141–162).[53] Among the positive criteria are: (1) Jewish symbols, such as a menorah, or other explicit Jewish symbols; (2) the presence of the word *Iudaeus* or its variants; (3) Jewish personal names; (4) the word for synagogue; (5) mention of synagogue office; (6) phrases and formulas that seem typically Jewish; and (7) location. Among the negative criteria, or counter-indications, of an inscription's "Jewishness" are the inclusion

[50] Schatzki's approach to identity and the social is useful here: "Identity in the sense of I-ness is not an inherent property of a thing or a substance called the subject. It is instead a social construction, an achievement realized only through the incorporation of human beings into the institutions and structures of social life" (1996, 7).

[51] I discuss the sense of *Iudaeus* in chapter three, where the meaning of the word appears to be inextricable from the funerary context of its inscription.

[52] Similar difficulties, of course, arise in the examination of early Christian art and inscriptions from Roman North Africa: for further discussion, see Jensen (2000, 10–15).

[53] Kraemer concludes accordingly that "we must keep in mind the fluidity of ancient social relations when considering inscriptions that seem incongruous to us. . . . I do not suggest this recognition of fluidity will enable us to resolve all of our difficulties in the identification of inscriptions, but it will help" (1989, 162). Also see discussion in Gibson (1999, 5–8) and Noy (*JIWE* 2, 5).

of references to (8) *Dis Manibus*;[54] (9) supplication to the pagan gods and the presence of distinctly "Christian" markers, such as the (10) chi rho symbol; (11) date of death; and (12) date of the burial or the phrase *depositus est.* Kraemer cautions that the use of these symbols is more ambiguous than scholars might wish (1991, 161) and that none of these markers can be considered to be definitive. As Kraemer points out, "Jews and Christians in the Greco-Roman world frequently employed many of the same symbols" (1991, 141).

In his brief treatment of "Identifying Jewish Inscriptions" within his work on *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs*, P.W. Van der Horst takes a slightly different approach. He identifies the "extremely tricky question of how to tell a Jewish inscription from a non-Jewish one" by identifying the minimal requirements for an inscription to be considered "certainly (or almost certainly) Jewish" (1991, 16). He states that "Jewish symbols are not an absolute guarantee for Jewishness either since these could be used also by Jewish Christians or even by Gentile Christians" (1991, 18). His solution is to use the presence of two or three criteria (symbols, names, use of Hebrew script, etc.) to label an artifact as Jewish (1991, 18).[55]

Yet where Kraemer allows for the possibility that multiple symbols might signify equally concurrent and unproblematic cultural affiliations, Van der Horst indicates that "methodological slackness (not being rigid enough with set criteria) runs the risk of including non-Jewish material that may blur the picture" (1991, 18).[56] This approach therefore resists the characterization of inscriptions as "Jewish," if they also include "negative" markers. But must Jews have always signified cultural exclusiveness in some way? How can modern scholars determine which criteria are more important, more normative, or more appropriate to mark "Jewishness" in a specific time and place? How can one make assumptions about what marks cultural or cultic "exclusivity"? An arbitrary decision of which combination of symbols is more indicative of one or another cultural affiliation risks depriving a study of the ranges

[54] For additional discussion of these and related terms, see chapters two and six.

[55] Van der Horst outlines his solution to the problem: "It is better, for the sake of clarity, to keep on the strict side, without being extremely rigorous. That is to say, application of two or three criteria together is to be much preferred above applying only one, the more so since in late antiquity Judaism, Christianity, and paganism were not always mutually exclusive categories" (1991, 18).

[56] My parenthesis.

of practices and identities these materials may signify in their specific North African setting.

(b) Envisioning Ranges of "Jewishness"

How, then, in this book, do I identify an object as "Jewish" and relevant for evaluation? My objective is not to identify artifacts that accord with an anachronistic typology of perfect Jewishness. Rather, it is to perform a more nuanced study, in which the "blurred" and "fluid" places are equally important for analysis as those inscriptions or artifacts that appear to be on the most polarized points of the spectrum (Kraemer 1991, 162).[57] Certain indicators that Kraemer and Van der Horst list, such as Jewish names, find contexts, mention of synagogues or their offices in inscriptions, the presence of common Jewish symbols, use of Hebrew language, and original physical proximity to inscriptions of definitive Jewish context, will all qualify an inscription to be reviewed as Jewish.[58] Yet, the presence of only one of these features will equally qualify an object's consideration here. The search for a greater number of external criteria does not circumscribe a more Jewish type of artifact. "Counter-indicative markers"—those such as *Dis Manibus* inscriptions, chi rho symbols, or "Christian" names or vocabulary, too—may simultaneously accompany artifacts with Jewish indices. Though the latter are considered "negative" indications of Jewishness by scholars who hold Jewish and non-Jewish beliefs and practices to be entirely incompatible, these are equally important to the establishment of ranges and complexities of African Jewish practice.[59]

[57] For more articulated metaphors for the discussion of "fluidity" and spectra of practice, see discussions in Boyarin (1998; 2004).

[58] Many of the factors these scholars list are not necessarily relevant to the North African corpus. To determine ultimately which symbols are meaningful markers in North Africa, we must look to other North African texts for comparisons. These markers too may have varied according to particular regional contexts.

[59] See Van der Horst (1991, 18). Kraemer rightly challenges the use of these negative indicators as well (1991, 161–2).

3. *Envisioning the Comparability of Jewishness*

Ultimately, I avoid treating Jews and Jewish materials as necessarily unique and culturally separate. Scholars' common preference to immediately compare Jewish artifacts from North Africa with those of foreign Jewish contexts elsewhere in the Mediterranean has obscured the possibility of understanding how Jews and their material culture were situated in their local, as well as their larger Mediterranean environments.

In this evaluation, I eschew traditional assumptions that ancient Jews were intrinsically separate from the culture of their neighbors and I question the notion that African Jews *primarily* identified with foreign cultures (Palestinian, Rabbinic) over local ones (North African). As a result, I favor the preliminary examination of Jewish artifacts in the context of their local cultures. When scholars address evidence for Syrian, Briton, or Egyptian inhabitants of North Africa, they necessarily compare that evidence first to that of neighboring populations and second to evidence from the regions of groups' origins (*e.g.*, Sartre 1975; Le Bohec 1987; 1989). Why should Jewish artifacts be treated differently?

This book reassesses the data by asking entirely different questions about it: How did North African Jews use materials to circumscribe their places on the North African cultural map? How does Jewish evidence vary? Does it appear to be cohesive, or not? Does it exhibit traits in common, or does it range throughout time and place? When and where do Jews use specific practices to represent themselves as different from or similar to their neighbors? Do they do this simultaneously? Do their means of achieving this vary throughout time and place? What does the word "Jew" mean in North African archaeological contexts? Does it have a discernable or unified sense? Following these alternate questions, I reach a basic conclusion: Jewish cultural identity in Roman North Africa was not necessarily Jewish first and North African second. I argue, rather, that Jewish cultural identities in Roman North Africa were primarily North African, although, as I demonstrate in the following chapter, North African cultures were themselves far from static. When Jewish artifacts index difference from those of Jews' neighbors, they usually do so in very specific, and frequently local, ways. North African Jewish practices of naming, writing, building sacred space, and burying the dead exemplify such tendencies. Jewish cultures of Roman North Africa were complex and regionally diverse; they changed throughout

time and shared fluid boundaries with the broader cultures in which they were embedded. Variations in the practices of Jewish populations and their cultural identities were as much reflections of distinct origins as of differing relationships with their North African neighbors.[60]

4. *Redefining Culture and Religion*

Distinct understandings of culture and its dynamics afford different understandings of North African Jewish identity and cultural comparability. Studies of cultural dynamics in the Roman world particularly shed light on the expanded possibilities for approaching Jewish populations within it. Recent critiques of "Romanization" and its twins, "Hellenization" and "Christianization," have raised cogent arguments about the fluid and interactive properties of culture and cultural identity and prove useful for related examinations here (Woolf 2004; 1998).[61] No longer does it suffice for scholars of the Hellenistic and Roman world to understand culture as static and monodirectional and usefully described in terms of "influence" or "assimilation."[62] Transformations of culture in the Roman Mediterranean require more nuanced description. Examinations of evidence for Jews and other populations

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[60] First generation North Africans probably exhibited the tendencies most appropriate to their places of origin. Related problems are treated in Lassère (1977, 385).

[61] New conversations about cultural situations of the Roman provinces correct historically problematic models of Romanization. Traditional European models of Romanization equated the process with the passive "civilizing" of native populations in Roman provinces. Bénabou furnishes one reaction to this tendency (1976), but recent studies have furnished more nuanced approaches. Jane Webster has produced an excellent critique of the history of Romanization and suggests terminologies of "Creolization" to describe cultural complexities of Celtic responses to Roman culture and religion (1999). Scholars such as Greg Woolf have noted the complex dynamics related to Romans' entry into a region; he asserts that Gauls did not become more Roman, per se, after the influx of Romans into Gaul. David Mattingly's careful analysis of cultural shifts among rural Libyans during the Hellenistic and early Roman periods comparably incorporates conversations about the fluid cultural dynamics and related interpretations of archaeological evidence (1994).

[62] This model posits that a "pure" indigenous population slowly adopts the practices, languages, and customs of an entirely new group, to become more like it. The assimilation model, which has sustained a longer period of popularity, is related to these conceptions. Rarely is "assimilation" thoroughly defined, but it is frequently and impressionistically used to describe the monodirectional flow of features from one culture into another (e.g. MacMullen 1997, 148). Sometimes it has a pejorative valence—it can imply that an "original" group loses its integrity by diffusing itself into a broader cultural schema. This model remains common particularly in the discussion of ancient Jewish populations.

in the Roman world are necessarily complex and benefit from these postcolonial approaches and critiques.

Recent scholarship has similarly questioned bifurcated approaches to the study of religion. A term employed to describe "religious" exchange or interaction, "syncretism," has traditionally labeled the composite features of religion or culture that might result from a population's direct exposure to new gods or new customs (Watanabe 1990, 131). Scholars of religion in Roman North Africa frequently use the term to explain the adoption of exogenous gods within African territories, and to account for the use of Roman names to label distinctly Libyan or Levantine conceptions of deity (*e.g.*, Cadotte 2007). Just as linear models of cultural assimilation are eschewed here, however, so too are those of syncretism that simplify the understanding of religion as an end-product of a merged A and B.[63] New approaches such as those of Woolf (1995) and Van Dommelen (1997) raise possibilities that religion, like culture, resists accurate divisibility and requires more nuanced description. In this book, categories of "culture" and "religion" serve as analytical tools rather than as static and "innate" categories. These tools expand the possibilities of reviewing Jewish evidence, but do not impose artificial restrictions on their investigation from the outset.

In this analysis, furthermore, I consider as an advantage the centrality of the vague, expansive, and inclusive properties of the word "culture."[64] As Ann Swidler notes, "Culture influences action not by providing the ultimate values toward which action is oriented, but by shaping a repertoire or 'tool kit' of habits, skills and styles from which people construct 'strategies of action'" (Swidler 1986, 273). I replace Swidler's "action" with "practice." Here *culture* is a concept that per-

[63] The concept of syncretism presumes the possibility that two pristine cultural forces are combined. The quantification of this process is elusive, but this label is less descriptive than it appears. Are there different ranges of syncretism? Does the shift in a god's name signify a commensurate shift in the understanding of the nature of that deity? How can this process be measured? Careful studies, such as those of Cadotte (2007) use more provisional definitions of "syncretism" to address the complexities involved in the confluences of religious practices, but the term remains an inherently problematic one.

[64] My use of the word will lie somewhere between historical anthropological approaches (Geertz 1973) and more recent studies of Christopher Herbert (1991) and Raymond Williams (1983). I am aware that the idea of "culture" "embodies. . . . highly interested attitudes" (Masuzawa 1998, 90), which result from the specific motivations and objectives of each particular approach to "culture." Despite the vagueness of the concept, it still serves as a means to situate artifacts and their interpretation within a specific context.

mits the situation and interpretation of artifacts within a framework of ancient uses and understandings. Just as culture can serve as an integral unity through which individuals relate and acquire understandings that ultimately establish their personal habits and outlook, so too can material culture. Perceptions of the unifying properties of culture can be adopted for the analysis of the objects that signify it. Just as anthropologists interpret more ephemeral facets of modern culture as resulting from a "tool kit," so too can historians interpret ancient material culture.[65]

To be certain, "culture," like "religion," is a nondescriptive and imposed category, which is rarely defined and, as such, has become exceedingly unpopular among theorists of religion and anthropology (Dirks 1992).[66] Tomoko Masuzawa critically argues, for example, that "the term 'culture' is dangerously capacious, semantically vague and confused, and finally, taken as a whole, inconsistent" (Masuzawa 1998, 71).[67] The history of the word's use is a varied and problematic one and is couched in the emergence of specific and historical ideologies (Williams 1958; Ringer 1969).[68] In this analysis, however, I consider as an advantage the explicitly vague, expansive, and inclusive properties of the word "culture." After all, a common relational system does not imply common or unified interests that underlie it. As Kathryn Tanner notes, participation in culture does not necessarily signify uniformity or "homogeneity," as participation in a single group may more frequently signify the opposite (1997, 56–7). She states that, "Whether or not culture is a common form of *agreement*, culture binds people together

[65] More detailed discussions of Bourdieu's approach to *habitus* are included in chapter three and elsewhere (Bourdieu 1990; 1993) and are elaborated in Calhoun (1995, 132–161).

[66] As a concept, "culture" is problematic, and its meaning cannot be considered to be intrinsic. Though the discussion requires more extensive treatment of the concept than I will provide here, I need only describe how and why I will continue to use the term in this analysis.

[67] Tomoko Masuzawa describes, "the categories of religion and culture in these configurations are both historically specific, fairly recent formations, and our daily employment of these terms, however natural and uncontroversial it may seem, is in fact mobilizing and energizing a powerful ideology of modernity, both feeding on and feeding into a certain logic that is central to our notion of who we are and what we are" (1998, 71).

[68] As more recent post colonial studies have identified, "the culture idea is therefore less a conceptual tool than a bundle of arguments, moral persuasions, in brief, and icon of a certain epistemological position were are persuaded to assume. As such the idea embodies *highly interested* attitudes" (Masuzawa 1998, 90).

as a common focus for *engagement*" (1997, 57). In this analysis, I seek to contextualize practice, not belief. As such, the model of cultural exploration is well suited: it enables the review of how Jewish artifacts and practices relate to those of their neighbors. Culture, then, serves as an interactive framework through which to compare material manifestations of practices of North African Jews and those of their Christian, Roman, and African neighbors.

While "culture" furnishes a useful framework for the discussion of whole populations, "cultural identity" facilitates a more precise language for the examination of particular artifacts. The advantage of "cultural identity," as Van Dommelen suggests, is its tailoring to the discussion of individuals' experiences within broader cultural environments (2001, 72). My interest in mapping archaeological objects within broader cultural systems simultaneously grounds the centrality of culture and the possibility of determining individuals' cultural identities.[69]

5. *Reconfiguring a Language to Discuss Culture*

Despite the adjustment of broader terms of inquiry, an additional question remains: is it possible to use an archaeological record to investigate the nuances of cultural dynamics?[70] Such an endeavor is complex and requires the combination of the diverse vocabularies and perspectives of archaeological, cultural, and theoretical disciplines.

Modified vocabularies from the study of semiotics furnish some of the most useful tools to describe relationships between artifacts, personal identity, cultural identity, and ancient cultures. Semiotics offer a more nuanced vocabulary to describe how objects can signify, or *index*, particular features of cultural identity (McHoul 1996, 137); the system anticipates and labels how different aspects of objects, or signs, might simultaneously reference opposing cultural notions.[71]

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[69] Van Dommelen soundly argues for the centrality of "cultural identity," rather than "culture," in his evaluation of cultural dynamics: "A shift in attention from 'cultures' to socio-economic groups of people in a specific regional context readily reveals the inherent ambiguities and uncertainties of Romanization processes. 'Cultural identity' rather than 'culture' then becomes the pivotal concept for considering the socio-economic developments taking place, because it is directly related to people's actions, experiences and perceptions" (2001, 72).

[70] Specific scholars argue that such possibilities of using archaeological evidence for cultural analysis are rather minimal. For related discussion, see Goodman (1994).

[71] In a study of late ancient populations, one cannot presume that all cultural markers are "intentional" and that objects are created according to individual and free will

According to this schema, signs' meanings are context-dependent. The signifier and the signified, furthermore, are metonymically related—the sign of the signifier anticipates the whole of the signified. The conventional example of this, as Ton Derks identifies, is the relationship between (the signifier) smoke and (the signified) fire (1998, 20). Symbols, unlike signs, however, have multiple meanings and retain their meanings outside of their immediate cultural contexts (Derks 1998, 20).[72] Symbols, such as crosses or menorot, for example, appear to retain meaning in various locations and contexts throughout the ancient Mediterranean. Related vocabularies of cultural marking and choice facilitate more precise means to dissect and describe artifacts' practical components and exhibitions of recognizable cultural traits.

The post-Sassurian vocabulary of semiotics might immediately appear inappropriate to describe any aspect of antiquity, because it has developed in response to fundamentally modern notions of human agency.[73] Ancient understandings of human action were probably quite different from those presumed within western cultures today. The average ancient man, let alone woman, probably possessed little room for active choices in his life, poised as he was between the understanding that humans' fates were determined by capricious god(s), and the realities of a tightly circumscribed social/economic structure that curtailed individuals' ability to experience any freedoms of choice at all. Such realities clearly counter those presumed within the semiotic system that is underlain by perceptions of consummate human agency (McHoul 1996, 92).

Some degree of choice, however, marks certain practices and artifacts from antiquity. Earlier in the Roman Republic, people of lower status might have possessed diminished ability to decide the form of their names, or their personal names. They might have used certain languages on a tombstone because it accorded with a sense of necessity and appropriateness. Yet specific aspects of funerary artifacts exhibit possibilities of personal preference, in addition to inevitabilities of social

(McHoul 1996, 92). For a separate discussion of indexicality in relation to ancient ritual practice, see discussion in Gilders (2004).

[72] As Derks describes in his treatment of Roman Britain, its symbols, and ritual practices, "The arbitrary character of the relations between the symbol and what it refers to implies an ambiguity which is typical of every language of symbols. Symbols never have a single, precise meaning. On the contrary, their power lies in the fact that they can evoke various meanings" (1998, 20–21).

[73] On the presumed incompatibility between modern theories and the study of ancient societies, see discussion in Schwartz (2001, 4–5).

constraint. Not all names were assigned by a master to a slave (though some were) and not all languages on tombstones accord with those that are conventional for an area or that appear to be even *functional* languages for those who inscribed them. A menorah probably *need* not have adorned an epitaph or a synagogue mosaic, but sometimes it did. Choice may have informed such decisions. The vocabulary of semiosis can be quite useful to more precisely describe and label these choices. The continual reassessment of the degrees to which an artifact exemplifies both *choice* and *restraint* of its commissioner is admittedly awkward. The semiotic vocabulary, however, furnishes the ability to isolate and describe degrees of cultural *sameness* as well as cultural *difference* that accompany the possibilities of human choice.

6. *Practice as a Taxonomy*

Particularly in the case of North Africa, I question the appropriateness of using foreign rabbinic or local Christian literary materials as a suitable means to organize and interpret the Jewish archaeological materials. Such methods necessarily produce a circular analysis, whereby the words of authors organize artifacts, which in turn fulfill the authors' descriptions. As none of the Babylonian or Palestinian rabbinic texts that mention North African rabbis provide any additional information about the contexts from which these rabbis emerged, such texts are less pertinent for reviewing North African practices.[74] Christian sources from North Africa frequently mention Jews in various capacities, but the manner in which they do is consistently polemical and opaque.

I consult rabbinic and Christian texts when their discussions are germane to this analysis. Yet both rabbinic and Christian categories are culturally *interested*, creative, and self-referential, and are, therefore, inappropriate vehicles for non-rabbinic Jewish (and non-"orthodox" Christian) artifacts' analysis. Though it is certainly common practice for ancient historians to use ancient literary evidence to illuminate the interpretation of archaeological materials, in the case of North Africa such an endeavor dooms the study to fulfill the words and perspectives of the polemicists.

In this book, the absence of rabbinic texts from the region is considered a datum, but not a deficiency, and the development of African Christian policies towards Jews is also considered a datum, and as a

[74] For more extensive discussion, see chapter two.

possibility, but not a demonstrable inevitability. As a result, I refuse to adopt ancient texts' models of "periphery and center"; archaeological data may account for practices entirely common yet deliberately absent from literary description.[75] Though it remains impossible to interpret the evidence entirely "in its own terms" (*cf.* Trebilco 1992, 4), every effort will be made to evaluate the African Jewish materials positively and outside of antagonistic Christian gazes.

My refusal to use literary texts as organizational and interpretive tools, however, forces the development of a different type of organization. I choose to use *practices* as artificial, yet internal, tools for organizing artifacts and for conducting their contextual evaluation. Rather than importing polemical categories, I adopt descriptive categories that relate to artifacts' original uses—these include practices of naming, language use, devotion, and burial. This list cannot account for all possible practices such artifacts encompass. Ancient systems are complex and I do not intend to imply that practices associated with burial were not also intrinsically social, familial, economic, and political. In isolating one type of practice, however, I develop a category as an analytical tool to compare one Jewish artifact to other artifacts in similar contexts, in similar regions, and in similar times. Attention to one aspect of an artifact's practical use permits this contextual examination.

Distinct approaches to the exploration of religion and archaeology facilitate this approach. In the capacity of this project, *religion* serves as an "anthropological . . . category," which can be explored through the examination of human practices rather than theological beliefs (Smith 1998, 269).[76] This understanding of religion accommodates the possibilities of archaeological examination. I do not dismiss the importance of approaching ancient religious belief, but such information is rarely and specifically apparent in the terse archaeological materials from North Africa. It needs to be deduced or postulated as cautious examination of the evidence warrants. As such, I examine materials' discernable and practical aspects while I acknowledge the coexistence of other aspects whose cultural features remain elusive and inchoate.

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[75] For related discussion of polemics and boundary-construction, see discussion in Boyarin (1999, 16) and n. 42.

[76] J.Z. Smith describes the application of "religion" itself as a term without meaning. Rather, in the tradition of Bourdieu, he notes that a more useful way to look at the traits of individual groups is through the specific practices which they demonstrate: these include eating practices, votive practices, among others. In this way, one can analyze palpable traits which might be characteristic of that group and signify its members' relationships to each other and others outside of it (1998, 268).

Coincidental approaches to religion, practice, and archaeology permit this contextual analysis of evidence of Jewish practices within North African territories (*cf.* Smith 1990, 37–53). For example, it is possible to examine epitaphs to compare the naming and writing practices of Jews with those of their neighbors, even if it is impossible to use the same data from the same epitaphs to compare Jews' beliefs or intentions with those of their neighbors. Categories of practices permit the creation of a local and archaeological matrix of interpretation that takes regional tendencies into account to engender a more nuanced examination of Jewish artifacts.[77] My attempt to redefine and reconsider Jewish materials, therefore, challenges both the presumptions of previous scholars about North African Jews' beliefs and exclusiveness and their methods employed to evaluate Jewish artifacts. By using analytical categories of practice to govern attention to ancient cultural identities, this book examines physical objects to question what "Jewish" might mean specifically among North African populations and within North African cultural contexts.

IV. Organization

The book's format reflects the methods, definitions, and limitations described above. Its framework facilitates the clearest possible evaluation of Jewish archaeological materials and of the practices they signify. Onomastic, linguistic, devotional, and burial practices integrate evaluations of artifacts from Jewish and non-Jewish North African populations.

Chapter two establishes a demographic and cultural framework for the subsequent evaluation of North African Jewish evidence. Despite Africa's thorough integration into the Roman Empire and its embrace of the Latin language and Roman cult by the second century C.E., the cultural composition of Roman Africa remained shifting and dynamic.

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[77] The understanding of artifacts as signifiers of practices also enables a more explicit and realistic understanding of how to approach ancient "sociality" and culture. As Theodore Schatzki describes, "practices are the medium in which lives interrelate. As this medium, they themselves are not simply interrelations among lives. Practices, consequently, are a dimension of human coexistence distinct—though not separate—from individuals and their interrelations" (1997, 14). Assuming this understanding of human behavior liberates this study from the static, categorical, belief-based "religion" which has implicitly governed previous analyses of the material.

Varied topography and settlement patterns assured that the cultural identities of North Africa's inhabitants varied according to time and region. Indigenous, Phoenician, Punic, Roman, Vandal, Byzantine, and Jewish populations, which bore overlapping linguistic, cultic, and religious features, collectively transformed North Africa's cultural landscape between the seventh century B.C.E. and the sixth century C.E. While the earliest Jewish evidence dates to later periods, this chapter undertakes a diachronic, demographic, and cultural approach to the fundamental complexities of the ancient North African world. This chapter argues that distinct features of Africa's demographic distribution, along with its history of colonization and conquest, underlay this cultural distinctiveness. Basic awareness of this cultural map situates the subsequent analysis of Jewish populations and their artifacts.

Chapter three addresses onomastic practices among Jewish populations in North Africa. In the Roman world, names encoded critical information about status, lineage, occupation, religious identity, place of origin, and citizenship (Salomies 2001, 73–74). Epitaphs frequently provided the only occasion to record information about a person—even the most minimal of North African Latin epitaphs included the name of the deceased. At times, "Jewish" names furnish the only evidence for the existence of Jewish populations in antiquity.

Previous studies have anticipated onomastic distinctions between Jewish and Roman North African onomastic conventions. In contrast, by reviewing Jewish naming practices in their local contexts, I argue that in most cases, Jews appear to choose Latin and locally popular African names over particularly "Jewish" ones. In some cases, Jews appear to use unusual names to differentiate themselves from others in a surrounding population. Yet African Jews' diachronic preferences for locally popular names illustrates how Jewish names most frequently and increasingly emulated African onomastic conventions through time.

Chapter four evaluates the varied language practices attested within Jewish epitaphs. Scholars have recently noted the cultural significance of language use in inscriptions (Bodel 2001), and for years, scholars of North African demographics have studied language and script use as markers of cultural identity (MacMullen 1968; Adams 1993; Millar 1968). The review of such practices, however, is rarer within scholarship of Jewish populations.[78] North African Jewish inscriptions most

[78] Three principal exceptions to this remain the excellent articles by Hayim Lapin (1999), David Noy (1997), and Seth Schwartz (1995).

frequently employ Latin, although in other Mediterranean regions, Jewish inscriptions are most commonly in Greek. Language use in Jewish North African inscriptions possesses situated cultural implications because it is different from that of most Jewish populations elsewhere.

In this chapter, I argue that North African Jews used commemorative language in complex ways that suggest commensurately complex North African identities. Most used the languages of their neighbors to mark their deceased, while some appear to have used the conventional languages of their local environments to subtly indicate difference from them (Lapin 1999, 257). The linguistic tools most Jews employed to index either cultural sameness or difference, however, most frequently adjusted to their local North African environments. Contextual examination of Jewish commemorative inscriptions, furthermore, reveals particularly North African Jewish patterns of language use.

Chapter five addresses the one extant example for the construction, decoration, and use of Jewish devotional space in North Africa. In this chapter, I treat the evidence for the synagogue at Hammam Lif as a case study to compare how Jews constructed, adorned, and dedicated their devotional space to how neighboring groups built and decorated their own. By evaluating evidence for these North African Jewish devotional practices within their local environment, I argue that this manifestation of a North African synagogue uses North African architectural, epigraphic, and decorative conventions to construct a distinctly Jewish North African sacred space.

Previous analyses of the Hammam Lif synagogue's structure compare it to that of synagogues in Greece and elsewhere (Goodenough 1953, 2.89–100; Hachlili 1998, 48). Indeed, in certain ways, the synagogue at Hammam Lif uses epigraphic signs and symbols to idiosyncratically mark the building as a "Jewish" one. The majority of the building's structural and decorative elements, however, are typical of North African sacred structures. The Hammam Lif synagogue is but one example of a Jewish devotional structure within North Africa, yet it definitively demonstrates the possibilities of constructing a particularly Jewish devotional space in a North African idiom.

In Chapter six, I investigate North African Jewish burial practices and architecture. I review marked decoration of Jewish tombs and burial spaces, use of grave goods, and possibilities of "mixed" (Jewish alongside non-Jewish) burials. Additionally, I examine how contingencies of archaeology have directed the interpretation of discernibly Jewish burial architecture. I argue that rather than imitating "Palestinian" or

"Talmudic" idiosyncratic burial practice, North African Jews appear to have commemorated death and burial in locally determined ways. I compare ranges of Jewish burial practices to those of their immediate neighbors to argue that Jewish burial practice is shaped more by local custom than previous scholars have considered.

This book adopts a cultural historical approach to North African Jewish archaeological materials that responds to the limitations of the evidence itself. The result of this study will be disappointing to some: in the end, the extant material evidence cannot provide enough information to responsibly write a social history of Jews of Roman North Africa. It furnishes neither sufficient information to account for Jews' *actual* relationships to Christians who surrounded them, nor enough information to establish exactly how Jews became situated in North Africa and precisely what their relationships might have been to subsequent generations of Jews who populated the region from the Middle Ages through modernity. I will speculate about social realities wherever it appears most responsible to do so, but the nature of the evidence severely limits the trustworthiness of the answers to such questions.

The problematic corpus bears the weight of these limitations. The distribution of the evidence is not only framed by the accidents of preservation and the biases of scholars, but also by our ability only to work with identifiably Jewish evidence. This necessity clearly contributes a sense of circularity to the investigation: I am testing a specific genre of evidence that appears to beg the question of its own "Jewishness." If anything, this study raises possibilities that certain types of evidence probably derived from Jews, but were so locally conventional that they remain completely unidentifiable. Unfortunately, I can only work with the Jewish evidence that explicitly marks itself as such. I do so with the understanding of the difficulties necessarily built into any approach to Jewish materials from antiquity.

In this book, then, I intend to analyze the identifiably Jewish evidence in the most accurate and fruitful ways possible. I use contextual examinations of Jewish evidence to question traditional presumptions about Jewish "innate-ness" and "separate-ness" that underlie previous scholarship on North African Judaism. Archaeological evidence for North African Jews furnishes but one example of how Mediterranean Jewish populations varied and how they identified themselves throughout space and time. Some African Jews named their children and buried their relatives in ways entirely distinct from their neighbors, while most appear to have preferred common local practices. In all cases, most Jews

appear to have neither isolated themselves nor actively differentiated themselves from North African material culture.

This study will maintain a general temporal and geographic locus. The time of Jews' arrival in western North Africa is unknown, but the earliest North African Jewish inscriptions date to the late second century C.E.[79] The temporal focus of the book, then, is limited to the periods that correspond to the dating of the Jewish artifacts during the Roman period: the second to sixth centuries C.E. Particularly in chapter two, I address earlier periods of North African demography and cultural history, when it is ultimately germane to the evaluation of Jewish materials. The majority of the book, however, emphasizes only the period in which Roman and Christian cultures dominated the culturally unified region until the Arab conquest.

Political boundaries and designations will also delimit this investigation: I use the Roman boundaries of the territories Africa Proconsularis, Tripolitania, Byzacena, Numidia, and the Mauretanias to designate the geographical limits for this study. This region includes the areas between ancient Medinet es-Sultan to Mogador—present-day Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. These boundaries, after all, are as geographic as they are cultural: Carthage united most of these areas as a cultural and economic capital. The scope of this book therefore excludes the study of Egypt and Cyrenaica, because their political and cultural situations were distinct from those within western territories.

For over twelve hundred years, excavation, scholarship, and uses of unarticulated methodologies have rendered Roman North African Jews as foils in the hands of the church fathers and of early Christian, colonial and modern historians with various interests. By applying more careful, contextualized, and nuanced examinations to the evidence for these populations, I cultivate a picture of this population that is more directed than previous studies toward improving broader understandings of late ancient North African as well as Mediterranean Jewish cultures.

This book contributes to ongoing conversations about different dynamics of religion and culture in the ancient Mediterranean. It represents one attempt to read the archaeological record outside the

[79] Modern Jewish communities in Tunisia date their historical presence in North Africa to the destruction of the first temple in Jerusalem. Oral histories ground this belief. For additional discussion, see chapter two.

center and periphery models that ancient authors have imposed and modern scholars have reinforced. In doing so, it engages the disciplines of classics, epigraphy, history, linguistics, and semiotics to inform an investigation of Jewish archaeological materials in a manner unusual within studies of ancient Jewish populations.

Jews lived within, responded to, and were created by their surrounding cultures. "Interaction," then, is not a possibility, but an implicit necessity; it is not a datum, but a point of departure for the dynamics of ancient society. Jews, in this way, cannot be immediately presumed to be distinct from their neighbors. Exactly where Jews use practices to circumscribe difference is important to explore. Yet, if Jews act differently from their neighbors, this is a cause for interest and examination, rather than treatment as a fulfilled expectation. Traditional presumptions of Jews' distinctiveness strip away the possibilities of appreciating the ranges of Jewish art, archaeology, and cultural situatedness. By refusing traditional perspectives on the separateness of Jewish groups, I change the way in which the evidence is questioned. By applying these methods to the Jewish evidence, this book recovers a more varied and internally determined understanding of the cultures and cultural identities of Jews in Roman North Africa.

CHAPTER TWO

LOCATING JEWS IN A NORTH AFRICAN WORLD

What is the most accurate description of a North African from the Roman period? Was he a dweller of the high steppe who exclusively spoke his tribal dialect and whose ancestors had traversed the Sahara's periphery for centuries? Was she an Egyptian slave, who spoke Greek and was purchased in an *emporium* in the Tripolitanian east to serve local, Punic-speaking elites of Levantine descent? Was he a Palmyrene-speaking soldier from Tadmor, Syria, whose legion the Romans had positioned to monitor Africa's Mauretanian borders? Was he a man of Libyan descent, who spoke Libyan dialects, worshipped his ancestors, and called himself a Christian? Or was she, perhaps, an urban-dwelling, Latin-speaking, Numidian Jew, whose grandfather had traveled to Africa from Puteoli? Each of these individuals could be characterized as an inhabitant of North Africa and thereby, as North African. Their descriptions, however, exemplify how variable were the origins and socio-economic status, as well as the linguistic and cultic practices of North Africans throughout proximate regions and times. From the eighth century B.C.E., through the first Arab conquest in the seventh century C.E., North Africans' most common features were the variety of their origins and their cultural identities. Individual North African populations require evaluation within this composite demographic and cultural context.

In this chapter, I argue that the constellation of ethnic, linguistic, and cultic practices associated with North African populations varied enormously throughout North Africa in the second through sixth centuries C.E. Tribal migrations, trade, and conquest periodically precipitated demographic fluctuations throughout the region and forged inextricable links between North Africans' cultural identities and those of their neighbors, their colonizers, and their conquerors. Cultural histories of individual North African populations, including Jews, require examination according to these regional dynamics of demography and culture: the complexities of North African and Jewish cultural identities appear thoroughly interconnected with the broader complexities of North African culture at large.

Contingencies of Mediterranean history suggest initial reasons for North Africa's demographic and cultural diversity. First, unlike most eastern Mediterranean regions, North Africa had remained impervious to the immediate cultural repercussions of the conquests of Alexander the Great—Alexander's troops had halted at Africa's eastern Libyan and Egyptian borders. While certain Tripolitanian cities, Punic *emporia*, and Numidian regions that maintained contacts with Hellenistic traders exhibited some cultural features of the Hellenistic east, North Africa's experience of Hellenization remained only sporadic and regionally determined. The Greek language and Hellenistic cults never gained the widespread popularity in North Africa that they had attained throughout the eastern Mediterranean.

Second, North Africa's transformation under Roman rule also differed from that of Rome's other western provinces. Centuries of indigenous and exogenous populations' migrations throughout North Africa shaped the region's variable demographic distribution. Continuous movements of nomadic-sedentarist tribes precipitated population fluctuations in the region's interior. Phoenician traders from the Levant had founded flourishing *emporia* along North Africa's coasts that subsequently attracted Greek-speaking merchants from throughout the Mediterranean. Rome's military, economic, and cultural infiltration of North Africa facilitated the immigration of Syrians, Spaniards, Egyptians, Macedonians, Noricans, Gauls, Jews, and others from Roman-conquered territories by the second century C.E. Subsequent invasions of Vandal and Byzantine troops additionally complicated North Africa's demographic composition. Continuous patterns of migration, trade, and conquest, therefore, had forged a substantively composite cultural environment in Roman North Africa.

Rome had introduced its military, languages, and cult into North Africa just as it had into other Roman provinces, such as Britain, Gaul, and Germany (Derks 1998; Woolf 1994), but North Africa's particularly composite demography and culture responded idiosyncratically to the cultural forces of the empire. Despite the high degree of connectivity in the Roman Empire, North Africa's varied history of population migration and conquest ensured discrepancies between Africa's and other western provinces' reactions to hegemonic cultures in the late ancient Mediterranean. North Africa's cultural climate developed distinctly from that in other regions of the Hellenistic and Roman Mediterranean world.

Reassessment of Jews' positions in North African society can only begin with their situation on this particular cultural map. Previous postulations about Jews' appearances in North Africa have encouraged scholarly assumptions about African Jews' inherent connectedness to other Mediterranean Jewish populations and disconnectedness from local African ones. By evaluating features of North African demography and cultural identity, this chapter serves to situate Jews squarely among the other minorities that populated North Africa. Artifacts of both African Jews and their neighbors and the cultural implications of their collective analyses depend upon such corrections.

Many recent and thorough studies have attended to the complexities of North Africa's cultural matrix. Scholars have marshaled literary and archaeological evidence to address questions about population distribution (Lassère 1977), industry and economic redistribution (Shaw 1995a), relationships between trade, Roman administrative policy (Watkins 2002), the military (Le Bohec 1987; 1996), urban development (Rakob 2000), and shifts in devotional practices (Webster 2002; Shaw 1981; 1995b).[1] The purpose of this chapter is not to replicate the range and depth of these studies, because the sophistication of the states of these questions defies superficial treatment. The present objective, rather, is to furnish minimal information to suggest the substantive complexity of the African society that included Jewish populations. More detailed examination of Jewish archaeological evidence in subsequent chapters relies on this basic introductory framework.

This book's emphasis on ancient cultural identities shapes this chapter's brief diachronic and transregional review of selected features of North African culture and prepares for the forthcoming discussions of Jewish practice and identity in North African contexts.[2] Only limited aspects of North African political, administrative, and economic policies will be reviewed here, according to their relationships to broader questions about local demography and cultural identity. This chapter, therefore, does not intend to serve as a comprehensive history of the

[1] In particular, the studies of Mattingly and Hitchner (1995), Rives (1998), Shaw (1995a; 1995b), Duval (1992), Le Bohec (1987), Mattingly (1994) and Fredriksen (1995; 2004; 2007) provide excellent introductions for archaeological and historical studies, as well as for the evaluation of early Christian materials.

[2] For discussions of the advantages of addressing "cultural identities," rather than "culture" exclusively, see Van Dommelen (2001) and my introduction, p. 40.

North African provinces; the seminal studies of Gsell (1911–1930) demonstrate how extensive responsible evaluations need be. In this chapter, rather, demography and cultural practices serve as lenses to examine the broader impact of historical events on African cultural identities in the late ancient world.[3] This approach responds to the nature of the Jewish evidence available and situates the subsequent discussions of local Jewish populations and practices.[4]

Here, I briefly review North Africa's environmental and human geography. I address several of North Africa's populations, whose languages and cult most shaped North Africa's broader cultural milieus. These include indigenous, Libyan, Phoenician, and Punic populations, as well as those populations whose presence in North Africa Rome introduced, such as Italic Romans and others from the Roman provinces. I also consider the impact of the Vandal and the Byzantine presence in North Africa after their successive invasions of the region. Finally, I introduce evidence for Jewish populations into this framework. Nuanced inter-

[3] Many excellent studies treat variable political circumstances in Africa (Cherry 1998) and the greater empire (Jones 1973), relationships between politics and religion (Rives 1995), and regional differences in administrative policies in Africa and Africa's role in the Mediterranean economy from the Hellenistic through late Roman periods (Mattingly 1994).

[4] Data for this review of African populations and practices are necessarily and intrinsically limited. Attestations of demographic patterns and cult necessarily rely on information from both literary and archaeological sources. Discussions of African demography, language, and religion, in texts of Appian, Tertullian, Augustine, Procopius, and Corippus, however, require careful evaluation. Frequently writers' reports of ancient populations are informed by their literary priorities. The difficulties are comparable when consulting texts of Tertullian and Augustine for attestations of late ancient African cult and religion; while these accounts, in many cases, offer the most complete contemporaneous narratives available on the subject, they are also shaped by the priorities and polemics of their authors. For related discussion, see Barnes (1985) and Fredriksen (1995). Also see Clover's discussion of Procopius and his report of Vandal populations in Carthage in the sixth century (1982, 11). The archaeological record, too, remains more problematic than it might initially appear—epigraphic and archaeological materials represent only a small proportion of the ranges of cultural identification and practices of North Africans in antiquity; only a fraction of North African populations were able to afford a commemoration in stone. Epigraphic conventions, too, frequently omit features that might otherwise mark idiosyncratic features of minority populations (Mattingly and Hitchner 1995). Other local populations may not have used writing, let alone inscribed letters on durable stone, as a customary means to commemorate their acts or the death of a loved one. Literary and archaeological records for North African populations, then, are considerably opaque—they suggest only possibilities about cultural features of Roman North Africa. Awareness of these limitations grounds more precise discussions of Jews' and other minorities' cultural identities in comparable cultural matrices.

pretations of Jewish artifacts and Jewish cultural identities ultimately rely on evaluations that adjust to the distinct demographic and cultural features of North African history.

I. Terminology

This study benefits from the use of terms that require brief definition. The synthetic discussion of demography, culture, religion, and historiography invites classifications that may appear overly generalizing and anachronistic when applied to the ancient world. The first of these is the term "population." Here, I variously employ the term to describe both individuals with shared origins, and, alternatively, those who share an identifiable feature, such as a common *ethnos*, or "ethnic" identity. This flexibility corresponds to the nature of the evidence itself. Some inscriptions, for example, incorporate toponyms to announce individuals' origins (*e.g., T. Flavious Maximos Cres Gortynos; CIL* 8.12924; Lassère 1977, 403), while still other inscriptions affix components to names to emphasize ethnic identity (e.g., *M(arcus) Iunius Punicus; IRT* 392; *cf.* 403, 434). Subsequent designations of "population" incorporate both of these patterns to avoid imposing fixity or a static "groupness" to all those of a particular demographic category—ancient "populations," after all, frequently overlapped. I envision ethnic or group identity, as well as individual *populations*, as processual and somewhat fluid designations.[5] The elasticity and inclusiveness of the category of populations proves advantageous for an examination of the diversity of North Africa's inhabitants and the cultural indices they adopted.

An additional term I employ requires similar review. Conventional uses of the word "minority" in modern western society describe differences of *power* rather than of relative population size.[6] Minority, here, serves only as a label of quantification—the term collectively classifies individuals who employed selective markers to distinguish themselves, in some way, as similar to each other and different from other local populations. To some degree, every population in North Africa was a

[5] In her discussion of race and ethnicity in early Christianity, Buell notes the problems embedded in conventional discussions of race and ethnicity in ancient texts. She advises that "[w]e need (instead) to view religion (including Christianity) as well as race and ethnicity, as strategic, contingent and mutable concepts" (2005, 29).

[6] For examples of these uses, see Súarez-Orozco (1991, 99–120).

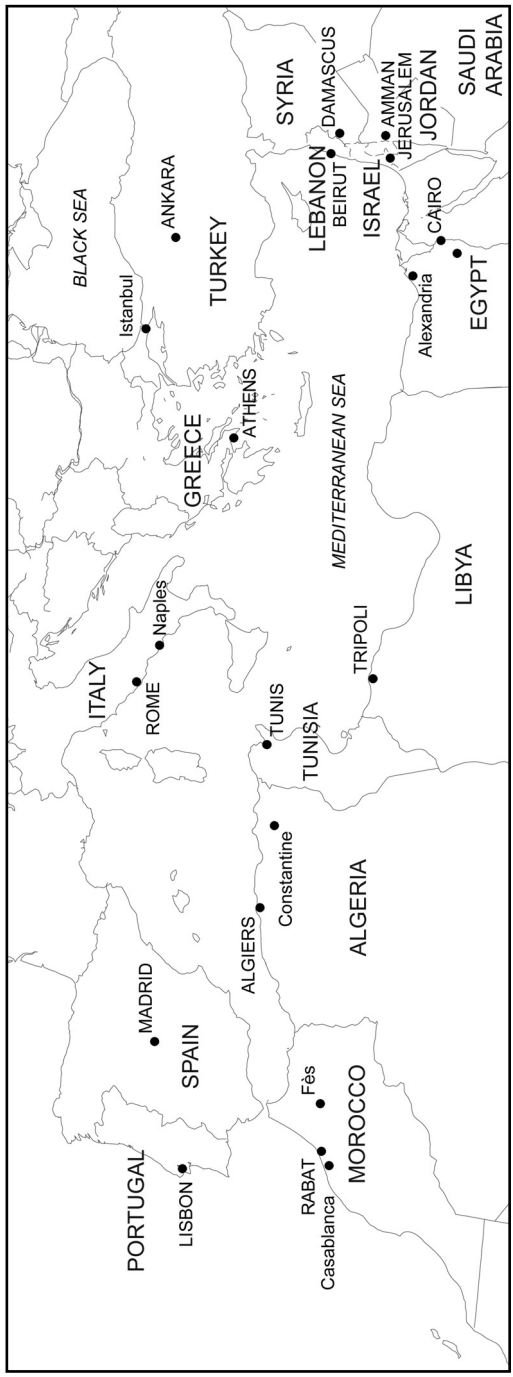
"minority": Italic Roman inhabitants of Africa certainly remained so throughout the Empire (Mattingly and Hitchner 1995). The adapted term, however, facilitates more precise comparisons of cohesive populations and their cultural identities within North Africa and elsewhere in the Mediterranean.

Other terms specifically label the dynamics whereby language or cult practices are integrated into cultures to which they were traditionally considered exogenous.[7] For example, scholars have commonly adapted the metaphor of *interpretatio Romana*, "Roman translation," to describe the processes of provincial populations' integration of Roman religion and cult into their own pre-existing cult systems and practices (*e.g.*, Cadotte 2007, 3; Rives 1995, 133–134).[8] Scholars usually apply *interpretatio* to explain processes of North Africans' applications of Roman names to their traditional local deities or their elision of practices of Roman worship into pre-existing local cults and cult practices. While scholars most commonly use this metaphor to classify the inclusiveness of North Africa pagan cult practices (Cadotte 2007),[9] in this chapter,

[7] The development and integration of indigenous, Libyphoenician, Punic, and Hellenistic cults created a complex medium for the subsequent situation of Roman religion and cult that later included Christianity (Brown 1968). My approaches to religion and culture are already detailed in chapter one. In this chapter, however, I also distinguish between genres of devotional practice. I employ the word "cult" as an umbrella term to describe devotional practice that, to some degree, involves sacrifice. I differently employ the word "religion" as an umbrella term to describe devotional practices of those who identify themselves as "non-sacrificing," such as Jews and Christians. These categories, of course, are often misnomers: they blur into one another and exhibit nearly identical ranges of devotional practice. This contrast, however, is one of the earliest hallmarks of Christianity versus African pagan cult, as described in Tertullian (*Apol.* 2.9). Sacrifice is a broadly defined term that includes the sacrifice of animals, plants, and liquids. Allegedly "non-sacrificial" populations often sacrifice, or pour libations at the grave of the deceased (Augustine *Ep.* 22), while some "sacrificial populations" might not sacrifice at all. These terms here serve as shorthand to imperfectly classify one facet of practices that were intrinsically social, economic, political, and familial, as well as devotional. These limited organizational terms, however, facilitate improved assessments of diachronic trends of devotional practices throughout North Africa. For an excellent treatment of this and related issues, see Stowers (1995, 293–333).

[8] This metaphor is borrowed from Tacitus (*Germ.* 43). For foundational discussions, see Wissowa (1919) and Nock (1972, 750–753).

[9] Of course, the description of "pagan," as opposed to "Jewish" or "Christian," creates an artificial bifurcation and separation of the populations' respective practices. This and subsequent uses of the word "pagan" serve as shorthand to designate the religion and cult practices of those who do not explicitly identify themselves as Christian or Jewish in Africa. They do not, however, imply an essential or binary difference between "pagan," Christian, or Jewish practices or understandings of deity. Directed studies of inscriptions and temple architecture in Lepcis Magna, Sabratha, and Carthage



Map 1. Modern political map of North Africa and the surrounding Mediterranean. Design courtesy of A. Stephenson

I also extend *intepretatio* to assist the preliminary examination of North African Christian and Jewish devotional practices (Brown 1968).[10] Complex forms of symbolization and ambiguous references to deity in both African Christian and Jewish epitaphs demonstrate the ultimate utility of the *interpretatio* metaphor to inform discussions of religious and cult practices of North African "pagans," as well as of North African Christians and Jews.

II. Environmental and Human Geography in North Africa

Discussions of North Africa's demographic and cultural environment necessarily begin with attention to the region's distinct climate and geography.[11] North Africa's extreme topographical features divided its populations, but its diverse climate and rich natural resources motivated population migrations, directed the development of regional and urban centers, and attracted pan-Mediterranean interest in the region.

In antiquity, as well as today, North Africa remained a region of extreme topographical and climatic variation. Bounded by the Atlantic Ocean in the west, the Mediterranean in the north, and the Sahara in the south and the east, North Africa served as the geographic interface between sub-Saharan Africa, the southern Levant, and Europe. Coastlines bordered by littoral forests, steppes bisected by mountain ranges, and semi-arid plains encircling deserts punctuate these regions and presently divide the modern countries of Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco.[12] Due to its impact on human geography, the ancient

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particularly demonstrate how inclined local populations were to adapt new deities and practices into their own devotional systems (Rives 1995; Mattingly 1994).

[10] Africa was one of the earliest western provinces to adopt Christianity, but the particularities of African martyr cults and the divisiveness of Christian factions in North Africa appear to relate to the regionally varied applications of *interpretatio* to the adoption of Christian practices.

[11] While this approach does not singularly embrace notions of environmental determinism, North Africa's climate and topography certainly impacted the organizational patterns of indigenous tribes and determined colonizers' and conquerors' interests in the region. More recent discussions of Mediterranean climate and culture abound. Horden and Purcell (2000) demonstrate one such approach.

[12] Topographical features of these regions were carefully mapped in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by French and Italian soldiers and scholars and recent work has been done by the Tunisian and Moroccan governments to map prehistoric African sites. The earliest atlases require updating, but remain useful tools for the mapping of Roman period archaeological sites. See Gsell (1902–1911); Babelon,

climate in North Africa has been the subject of much scholarly debate.[13] While Roman historians traditionally argued that the North African climate has shifted since antiquity, scholars such as Brent Shaw (1976; 2003), David Cherry (1998), and David Mattingly (1994) have argued for general consistencies in its modern and ancient manifestations.[14]

Technological responses to Africa's climate shaped North Africa's role as a trade source.[15] Roman historians traditionally claimed that North Africa was the "bread basket" of the Mediterranean, but there is little indication that, in many places, local dry-farming techniques yielded agricultural surpluses that exceeded levels of subsistence (Fentress

Cagnat, Merlin, and Reinach (1892–1926); Caillemer and R. Chevallier (1959); and for prehistoric materials, Souville (1978). For more extensive discussion of climate and human and environmental geography see Mattingly and Hitchner (1995, 168 and nn. 38–40). In the past 20 years, UNESCO surveys conducted in the Libyan Valleys and throughout Tunisia have improved understandings of the relationships between the North African environment and human responses to it.

[13] Environmental functionalism no longer serves as a sufficient method of cultural interpretation, but connections between climate and land use and cultural and social development are necessarily critical to treatments of the ancient African world. The problems of social interpretations of climate models, and of climate models themselves, are discussed in Burnes and Denness (1985, 201). Studies have addressed the possibilities of the prehistoric climate throughout the region (Shaw 1981b, 157), that which accompanied the sporadic development of settlements inland and along the coasts, and the impact of rainfall and water distribution (Shaw 1984, 157; Mattingly 1994). For considerations of settlement in the Libyan Valleys, see discussion in Jones (1985, 263) and Barker (1985, 291).

[14] Shaw has particularly noted how colonial ideologies have informed traditional understandings of the cultural declines that beset North Africa since antiquity. He argues that two etiological "myths" have justified these descriptions of decline. The first of these is the "Invasion Hypothesis" that draws from beliefs in Africa's decline following the Vandal invasions, the Arab conquests of the seventh and eleventh centuries, and the marauding "nomadic tribesmen" to whom Ibn Khaldûn ascribes the quelling of civilization in the Maghreb (1976, 384). Second, he suggests that arguments about climate change, particularly, are "developed on the basis of false assumptions about the past, dubious literary evidence, and misunderstood archaeological data, . . . [that have taken] an impetus of their own and continue to affect many investigations into climatic change in the ancient Mediterranean" (1976, 379).

[15] Local developments of irrigation techniques, water storage, and agricultural technologies permitted the manipulation of the harshest environments for agrarian production (Banaji 2001). Indigenous populations probably developed these techniques. Cherry, for example, identifies two principle methods of water management. One diverts and dams rainwater, another implements terracing systems on hillsides to prevent erosion and "to retain rainfall or snow-melt long enough to replenish the water-table" (1998, 16–17). Mattingly (1994) and Shaw (1984, 124) argue that there is no evidence to indicate that these technologies were introduced by the Romans themselves.

1979, 26).[16] Local advances in methods of agriculture, viticulture, oleoculture, and even pastoralism, however, justified their products' exportation and attracted traders from other regions of the Mediterranean (Shaw 1984, 141; Mattingly 1985, 38; Greene 1995, 312; Mattingly and Hitchner 1995).[17] Africa, furthermore, became a source of human trade—local entrapment of slaves and their sale probably fed participation in regional slave markets (Mattingly 1994, 25). North Africa's climate and resources assured its important position in the Mediterranean economy and fortified its role as a destination and source of Mediterranean trade.

III. Human Geography

A. *African Tribes and* Populi

While many exogenous populations gravitated toward urban settlements, nomadic and seminomadic North African tribes, labeled broadly as Africans, Libyans, Berbers and Moors, flourished in African deserts and steppes from antiquity through the Middle Ages.[18] Greek and

[16] Studies of farming techniques and water-management strategies furnish critical information about human manipulations of local environments (Cherry 1998, 16; Shaw 1984). Recent studies have increasingly undermined traditional scholarly assumptions that land-altering agricultural techniques and evidence for water management necessarily postdated Roman entry into Africa: recent studies of Mattingly (1994) and Shaw (1984; 1995a) indicate that earlier African inhabitants probably developed these technological strategies before the Romans entered Africa. For additional discussion, see Mattingly and Hitchner (1995, 187) and Birebent (1964). In most African regions, attestations of human habitation in the pre-historic period remain somewhat obscure (Cherry 1998, 10–11), but aerial and land surveys inform improved studies of prehistoric land use.

[17] For theories about the Roman and Byzantine transformations of the landscape, see Trousset (1997). Mattingly argues that olive cultivation could take place in the pre-desert as well as littoral regions of Tripolitania, for "it is nonsense to suggest that olives could not (and cannot) be cultivated" in the pre-desert, "south of the 150 mm isohyet" (1985, 38). Of course, as Fentress has noted, "surplus" is not a necessary prerequisite for trade (1978). For additional discussion see Cherry (1998, 10). Olive oil was not an indigenous crop in North Africa, but it appears that the Phoenicians themselves brought olive trees to the continent hundreds of years before. During the Roman period, this export crop continued to flourish (Greene 1997a).

[18] These names, of course, are generalizations, simplifications and, at times, anachronisms. They serve as scholarly shorthand for the ranges of indigenous populations in Africa for whom we possess little information. For discussions of the tribes that literary sources identify, see Désanges (1962, 1993) and Fentress and Brett (1996).

Latin sources record the names for these groups, or "tribes," whose hierarchies governed Africa's interior. These included dominant tribes of *Numidiae, Gaetuli, Mauri, Garamantes*, and *Musulamii* (Mattingly 1994, 22–24), as well as smaller population groupings—*populi*.[19] According to Pliny, 516 populi (53 urban populi among them) dwelled between the western borders of Cyrenaica (modern day Libya) and the eastern borders of Mauretania (modern day Morocco),[20] but modern scholars have identified names for only a fraction of this number in literary and archaeological sources (Mattingly 1994, 19; Désanges 1962).[21] The settlement patterns, language, and cultic practices of these indigenous populations changed and adapted throughout subsequent periods of colonization and conquest.[22]

1. *Demographic Impact*

Most attestations of Africa's indigenous populations postdate the third century B.C.E. While Greco-Roman literary treatments from later periods furnish the majority of evidence for their tribal organizations and distributions (Mattingly 1994),[23] local tribes appear to have preceded

[19] Until the time of the Roman Republic, the most powerful of these tribes were the *Numidiae* of the Tell, the *Gaetuli* of the steppe, and the *Mauri* (Moors), who occupied Mauretania—the area extending between the borders of modern Morocco and Algeria. Large tribes also included the *Garamantes* in the Algerian southeast and in the southwest of modern Libya (Cherry 1998, 18; Mattingly 1994) and the *Musulamii* along the modern Tunisian and Algerian border, between modern El Kef, in Tunisia, and Theuveste, Algeria (Mattingly 1994, 19; Cherry 1998, 18). *Gaetuli* probably dwelled at the edge of the Sahara in modern Algeria's southwest, but literary references to the *Gaetuli* ascribe to them three distinct geographical regions (Mattingly 1994, 29).

[20] Pliny's distinct taxonomies for some of these groups (*tribus* versus *populus*) remain obscure. His descriptions, however, imply that Africa's interior was teeming with diverse clusters of indigenous populations.

[21] Others of these included the *Masaesyli*, who occupied northwestern extremities of modern Algeria to the North of the Atlas range, the *Massyli*, situated just west of modern Tunisian Tabarka, and the *Suburbures* and the *Nicives* along the Aurès mountain range (Cherry 1998, 18).

[22] "Indigenous" is an artificial and relational term that often appears to merely update the word "native" by ascribing a timelessness and uniformity to particular populations (Beteille 1998, 187–191). This term here labels the relative rates of populations' documentation in North Africa, but does not ascribe a static and monolithic designation for these populations.

[23] Distributions of indigenous tribes consistently shifted. Internal migrations, tribal alliances, and local responses to Rome's economic and military policies impacted local populations throughout the Roman period. Roman policies were developed to curtail internal migrations that were, intrinsically, unstoppable and continuous. For discussions of the "dangers" nomads posed to Romans, see Shaw (1982, 25–46).

Phoenician arrival in Africa by hundreds of years. Lack of clear archaeological evidence deprives scholars of fuller understandings of most of these populations, but some archaeological features, previously assumed to be of the Roman period, may attest to pre-Roman indigenous tribal settlements.[24] The nomadic, seminomadic and nomadic-sedentarist structures of many such tribal societies largely account for the evidentiary lacunae for them (Mattingly and Hitchner 1995, 172; Rebuffat 1990, 231).[25]

2. *Language Practices and Distribution*

Due to the absence of relevant archaeological evidence, the precise languages spoken by many of North Africa's indigenous populations remain elusive. So-called "Libyans," however, furnish an exception for the discussion of regional language practices. Libyans remain among the most visible of Africa's populations, partly because of their identifiable epigraphic and archaeological record that dates to the middle of the first millennium B.C.E. (Mattingly and Hitchner 1995, 172).[26] Studies have identified distinct variations in Libyan alphabets that correspond with population groupings in Numidia, the Sahara, and Tripolitania.[27] Personal names and inscriptions from later periods indicate continuities

[24] Characteristic stone constructions along the Algerian mountain ranges, for example, which tend to be built in naturally protected isthmuses and in desert oases, may furnish examples of earlier indigenous occupation and architecture (Cherry 1998, 21–22).

[25] As Rebuffat notes, archaeology, which is the only source of evidence for pre-Roman populations from North Africa, is ill-equipped for the discussion of nomadic (or even seminomadic) societies (1990, 231). Literary sources raise possibilities about the names and characteristics of these groups, but caution is recommended when evaluating Greek and Roman descriptions of them. McCall identifies nearly adjacent and conflicting passages, in which Herodotus describes traits of the Garamantes (1999, 197). Hyperbole reigns throughout many of these accounts. In his satires, Lucian, for example, describes the Garamantes and their local giant ostriches (*Dips.* 2). For treatment of Lucan's and Lucian's representations of Libya, see Leigh (2000, 100).

[26] Bilingual ostraca from the military garrison at Bu Njem have encouraged studies of local enlistment for Roman army service and of the existence of Libyan poetry. General presence of Libyans is also discernable through particular scripts and names recounted on cinerary urns and on mausolea. The cultural and linguistic practices among Libyan tribes of the Garamantes and in the central territories of the Sahel remained impervious to Roman and even Christian paradigms for decades (Ferchiou 1995, 111).

[27] For discussion, see Mattingly and Hitchner (1995, 172) and, especially, Camps (1983, 177–84), who correlates linguistic groupings among Libyan populations with consistencies in their plough technologies.

in multiple Libyan writing and script systems, as do patterns in allocations of personal names and architectural preferences, particularly in the region of Tripolitania (Mattingly and Hitchner 1995, 173).[28] Libyan populations retained particular onomastic, linguistic, and devotional characteristics even after their subsequent cultural integration with western Phoenician settlers and Roman populations (Mattingly and Hitchner 1995, 200; Chabot 1940; Várhelyi 1998, 391–395; Cherry 1997).[29]

3. *Transformations of Cult and Religion*

The majority of extant information about indigenous cult derives from corresponding Libyan contexts.[30] Benabou devotes an entire chapter to "Éléments de l'ancienne religion libyque" (1976, 267–308), but subsequent scholars have approached extant evidence for Libyan cult more cautiously; certain aspects of Libyan cult that preceded Phoenician and Roman integration remain obscure.[31] One feature of Libyan cult that scholars most widely acknowledge, however, was its rapid and continuous synthesis with other cults in the region from Egyptian, Ethiopian, Greek, Punic, Roman, Vandal, and Byzantine contexts (Mattingly 1994; Elmayer 1982; Fredricksmeyer 1991, 191). The prominent Libyan god Ammon, for example, appears to have originated in the oases of Egypt, while others, such as Eshmoun, may link to deities of Punic derivation.[32]

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[28] Much research remains to be done on the "Libyan" scripts and dialects, which are classified as part of the Hamitic language family. The only surviving evidence for this language group is epigraphic, and the corpus is only partially translated and understood. The scripts, with letters that resemble boxes and circles, were employed on stone inscriptions and ostraca throughout the African territories. It is unclear whether its use corresponds to a particular "ethnic" continuity or not, though certain name patterns that accompany this language appear to be consistently and distinctly Libyan (Mattingly 1994).

[29] While Chabot's corpus remains important (1940) other scholars have recently addressed some of the problems endemic to "Libyan" epigraphy, *e.g.*, Galand (2001, 55).

[30] Interpretations of these texts, *e.g., CIL* 8.5884, vary; it is unclear whether, during the Roman period, names of Roman deities replaced local Libyan deities' names. While indigenous populations probably possessed their own forms of cult, evidence for it remains particularly elusive.

[31] Benabou's treatment of "L'africanisation des divinités romaines" (1976, 331–375) follows his chapter on Libyan Cult.

[32] Ammon (later Jupiter Ammon) granted protection for travelers and was associated with a cult of the dead, prophecy, and oases (Fredricksmeyer 1991, 191). The spread of

One of the more prominent features of Libyan cult relates to practices of ancestor worship. Libyans apparently conducted elaborate rites at tombs that may have integrated additional practices, such as consultations with spirits of the dead (Mattingly 1994, 39).[33] Many of these commemorative practices, however, are only documented in later periods after Punic and Roman contact. Improved archaeological evidence for Libyan religion accompanies both its integration with Punic and Roman cult and its incorporation of corresponding devotional practices (Cadotte 2007, 3).[34]

B. *Phoenicians, Punics, and Libyphoenicians*

The arrival of Levantine Phoenician traders along North Africa's shores had transformed the region's demographic and cultural distribution by the eighth century B.C.E.[35] Coastlines with attractive and evenly spaced natural harbors had encouraged Phoenician trade with Africa; Phoenicians originally populated the southern Mediterranean coastline to maintain their extended trade networks. Herodotus recounts that many Phoenicians chose to remain in these regions after they had originally settled along Africa's coasts to grow crops to sustain their sailors and trade workers (4.42.2). Distributions of archaeological evidence along the North African coast attest to Phoenician settlement patterns that accord with Herodotus's description (Boardman 2001; Mattingly and Hitchner 1995, 172).

Ammon cult in Tripolitania is attested in the presence of *Ammonia*, or temples/shrines to Ammon, which have been discovered in Libyan oases (Mattingly 1994, 39).

[33] These notions of ancestor worship at oases appear to extend's into worship of saints in later periods. For discussion, see Mason (1974).

[34] The problems of identifying "indigenous" cult, of course, relate to the limitations of available evidence. Preservation of Libyan inscriptions is much poorer than that of Punic, Neo-Punic, and Latin texts. For discussion, see Mattingly (1994).

[35] As described by Mattingly and Hitchner in their archaeological survey, "the process of Phoenician colonization of the African littoral and the emergence of Carthaginian dominance among the Phoenician emporia were events of Mediterranean significance" (1995, 172). For discussion of Phoenician and Punic domination of Africa and its economic ramifications, see Sznycer (1976).

1. *Demographic Impact*

Within centuries, Phoenician traders and settlers had spread across Africa's northern coastline.[36] They established various port cities such as Carthage, Utica, Cherchel, Sabratha, and Lepcis Magna, which were spaced roughly one day's sail apart from neighboring ports along the Mediterranean coast (Mattingly 1994, 25; Greene 1997, 357; Potter 1995, 7). This geographic consistency assured the reliability of Phoenicians' trade routes and their ultimate dominance of trade between Europe, the Levant, and Africa in the southern Mediterranean (Sallust *Jug.* 19.1–2). Descriptions within Greek and Roman sources, such as Appian (*Pun.* 1.1–2), as well as distributions of African amphorae throughout the eastern and northern Mediterranean via Carthage and Lepcis, plainly demonstrate the scope and efficacy of Phoenician trade networks throughout the Mediterranean and Aegean.[37] By the third century B.C.E., the western Phoenician trading empire had extended to Sicily as well as Sardinia (Van Dommelen 1997; 2001).[38]

Common in literary treatments of western Phoenician populations is the discussion of their marriages and ensuing cultural mingling with indigenous North African tribes. Livy's description of Phoenicians' intermarriages with Libyans explained the subsequently interwoven *Libyphoenician* culture, which preserved both Libyan and Levantine social, economic, linguistic and cultic elements (*Ab urb. cond.* 21.22.3). Scholars adopt the artificial and generalizing term *Libyphoenician* to characterize the resulting populations that inhabited coastal regions between

[36] Phoenicians' attentions were not limited to their work on the sea. Their agricultural successes within the region were legendary—North African farmers were renowned for their particular skills of olive and vine cultivation. Some argue that the agricultural treatises of Latin writers such as Varro, Columella, and Pliny drew from the original texts of the Punic Mago (Greene and Kehoe 1995, 116). Western Phoenicians had imported the olive and its products to Africa, but their subsequent exportation of olive oil from the region dominated the commodity's Mediterranean trade (Février 1989, 167; Mattingly 1994, 138). For detailed discussion of the capacity of Tripolitanian olive oil production, see Mattingly (1985, 30–33).

[37] For discussion of the trade patterns of Carthaginians throughout the Mediterranean and the Aegean, especially on Delos, see Chandezon and Krings (2001, 35–53).

[38] In these regions, populations continued to retain Punic cultural features even after Rome's rupture of Punic trade routes in the second century B.C.E. While Van Dommelen clearly articulates the complexities of quantifying cultural change and adaptation, he explicitly asserts the "'failure' of Romanization in Sardinia" (2001, 72).

Byzacena and Carthage and towns such as Oea, Sabratha, Lepcis Magna, Gigithis, and Tacapae (Mattingly 1994, 25).[39]

Libyphoenican and Hellenistic populations frequently coincided in North Africa's trade cities. Punic trade centers, or *emporia*, had particularly attracted Greek-speaking merchants from the Hellenistic east by the third and second centuries B.C.E.[40] The popularity of Hellenistic architecture and art in Lepcis Magna and Sabratha, as well as in the Tripolitanian merchants' trade centers overseas, reflected the evolving connections between Punic, Libyphoenician, and Hellenistic populations.[41] The local presence of Egyptians, eastern Libyans, Greeks, and other Greek-speakers from the Hellenistic east, assured that these *emporia* retained a greater Hellenic and Hellenistic presence than most other African regions.[42] Even during later periods, Tripolitania maintained more pronounced Hellenistic and Libyphoenician cultural features than did its western neighbors.[43]

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[39] "Libyphoenician," in many ways, is a nondescriptive term—this population was just as culturally composite as most others in North African society. As Mattingly notes, furthermore, "the apparent coherence of the group name was by no means evident to the Libyphoenicians themselves" (1994, 25). From the earliest stages, therefore, ancient authors imposed their imprint on information about these populations (Mattingly, 25).

[40] Strabo notes that by the time of the Third Punic War, 700,000 people populated Carthage (*Geog.* 5). The numbers Strabo mentions are unreliable, but demonstrate the perception of the relative size of Africa's emporia, including Carthage, before the wars with Rome. For discussion of the *emporia* and their Hellenistic features, see Coarelli and Thébert (1988, 761–818).

[41] Trade wealth permitted the local construction of advanced harbors and administrative and cult centers in these *emporia*, whose architecture reflected both Punic and eastern Hellenistic components. For discussion of the emporia and their Hellenistic features, see Coarelli and Thébert (1988, 761–818).

[42] Rives (2001). For descriptions of estates that appear to be Libyphoenician, rather than Roman, see descriptions in Apuleius (*Apol.* 88, 93); for discussion see Mattingly (1985).

[43] Libyan and Neo-Punic inscriptions appear to have been incised through the second century C.E. Related languages probably continued to be spoken indefinitely, though the scripts' epigraphic uses disappear by this time. Simultaneously, the continued use of bilingual inscriptions, names, idiosyncratic orthography and grammar, traditional art motifs, and symbols of Punic deities signify the continued flourishing of local cultures and their creative responses to the metamorphosis of Roman culture in the western provinces. Apuleius's response to accusation that his wife and stepson spoke Punic attest to the persistence of the use of this language in the Tripolitanian, as well as the Proconsular region in the first and second centuries (*Apol.* 98.8–9).

2. *Language Practices and Distribution*

Scholars' labels for western Phoenician merchants and settlers mimic Greco-Roman authors' taxonomies for them and for their languages. Latin writers labeled as *Poeni* the Phoenicians who settled and remained in Africa.[44] Modern scholars conventionally convert *Poeni* to "Punic;"[45] they use the latter term to describe the Semitic language and related culture of Phoenician settlers in Africa after 500 B.C.E., to distinguish it from the Phoenician language and culture of the Levant before that period.[46] Additional terminologies scholars apply to these populations also derive from linguistic classifications.[47] Scholars developed the term "Neo-Punic" to describe the shifts in the Punic script that followed the defeat of Carthage in the Punic Wars (246–146 B.C.E.). The degree of literacy and literary culture among these populations remains elusive, however, because no extensive Phoenician, Punic, or Neo-Punic literary sources survive and the only extant examples of these languages are devotional and commemorative and, most commonly, terse.[48] Inscriptions in Phoenician, Punic and Neo-Punic scripts, however, have been discovered throughout North Africa through the Roman period.

The absolute longevity of the Punic language remains a matter of scholarly debate. The latest attested use of Neo-Punic writing dates to

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[44] Of course, these Latin terminologies cannot be considered as neutral. For a discussion of the implications of the word *Poenus* and its cognates and the related *Carthaginiensis*, in Latin literature, see Franko (1994).

[45] Scholars' dependence on Latin literary terms to establish this taxonomy has preserved a Roman imprint on the cultural history of the southern Mediterranean.

[46] Greene (1997a, 155) and MacMullen (1966, 11–12) discuss this point more thoroughly. Augustine, writing in the fifth century, stated that the Punic "*rustici*," the country people of Phoenician descent, who lived near Hippo, called themselves "Chanani," or "Canaanites" in their own language (*Ep. quaest. Rom.* 13). This statement may, however, relate to Augustine's possible motivations in casting this group as analogous to the Levantine Canaanites.

[47] The Phoenicians and their descendants employed languages that reflected their Levantine origins and their naming of Carthage—Qart Hadasht, "new city"—reflects their use of this Semitic vocabulary. Western Phoenicians and their descendants used a Northwestern Semitic dialect related to Canaanite, Hebrew, and Edomite. For example, see *CIS* 2.1–3. Most early inscriptions that document these Semitic dialects employ scripts that resemble those from the Levant. During the fourth and third centuries B.C.E., Punic scripts slowly acquired a more cursive appearance.

[48] Allegedly, after the Carthagians' defeat in the Third Punic War, the Romans punished the Carthaginians by handing the entire library of Punic writings to the neighboring Numidian King Jugurtha. The library burned and all writings were subsequently lost (Greene and Kehoe 1995, 110–112).

the second century C.E., but it is unclear whether the Punic language survived in the west through late antiquity (Millar 1968).[49] Even after Punic and Neo-Punic epigraphy declined, however, Punic onomastic patterns in later inscriptions in the Latin language and script demonstrate the maintenance of distinctly Punic and Roman Punico-African cultural indices through the fourth and fifth centuries C.E.

In Tripolitania, particularly, language patterns developed distinctly from the rest of North Africa. This difference responded both to the presences of local Punic and Libyphoenician elites and to the region's proximity to Greek-speaking regions, such as Berenike and Cyrenaica, which had been directly Hellenized by Alexander's troops.[50] Tripolitanian *emporia*'s closer trade ties to the east, furthermore, assured the greater prominence of Greek, Punic, and other languages in these regions.

3. *Transformations of Cult and Religion*

Earliest evidence for Phoenician and Punic cults in Africa reflects the settlers' Levantine origins. Tanit, a western name of the Levantine goddess Asherah, was particularly revered in Carthage; Phoenician Caelestis, whose worship is attested in Gaul, Germany, and Britain, is also identified with Tanit elsewhere in Africa.[51] Votive stelai and cinerary remains attest to one of the common devotional practices for Tanit: the conduct of child and small animal sacrifice. This cult practice appears to be more strongly associated with Tanit than with any other local deities.[52] Additional gods, such as Melqart, Baal Hammon, and

[49] The historicity of literary assertions about the survival of Punic speaking populations in Africa Proconsularis through late antiquity also remains questionable, though it is still attested in Augustine (*Ep.* 17.2; 209.2) and Procopius (*Bell. Vand.* 2.10). Greene (1997a, 155) and MacMullen (1966, 11–12) discuss this point more thoroughly.

[50] For discussions of culture and language in Cyrene, see Barker, Lloyd, and Reynolds (1985) and Laronde (1987).

[51] The inscriptions that attest to Caelestis's worship in the western Mediterranean include *CIL* 3.993, *CIL* 5.5765, and *CIL* 6.2242. Extensive discussion of this and related cult practices in Cadotte (2007, 63).

[52] The "tophet," or precinct of the goddess Tanit in Carthage, remains one of the most notorious manifestations of local cult practice. In such sanctuaries, extant funerary stelai and inscribed cinerary urns indicate that the children and animals buried there had been dedicated (sacrificed) specifically to Tanit (Greene 1997, 158) Modern scholars have applied biblical terminology to supply the name for the open-air sanctuary (2 *Kgs*. 23:10). Excavations have determined that the active use of the Carthaginian tophet extended from approximately 800 B.C.E. through 186 B.C.E. (Greene 1997, 158–159). Other Phoenician cemeteries along the Tunisian coastline appear to have fulfilled similar

Ashtarte, were commonly venerated elsewhere in Numidia and Tripolitania; cult centers in Lepcis Magna, Sabratha and Oea demonstrate the popularity of their local cults (Mattingly 1994).[53]

Particular features of Phoenician and Punic cult particularly responded to the merging of Levantine devotional practices with those of indigenous African and Libyan populations. Cadotte describes as *mélanges libyo-puniques* the syntheses of Punic and indigenous North African cults. Evidence for such cultic *mélanges* includes inscriptions dedicated to deities with doubled names (one Punic and one Libyan), and, occasionally, images of Punic deities depicted in local Libyan costume (Cadotte 2007, 3). Temple architecture and decoration, in addition to votive inscriptions and funerary stelai marked with multiple deities' symbols, furnish evidence for ranges of merged Levantine and local cult practices and architecture (Cadotte 2007; Mattingly 1994).

In different cases, Hellenistic and Punic cults had already elided before Punic traders had formally introduced them into Africa (Cadotte 2007, 4). The ultimate integration of Hellenistic, Roman, and Punic cults, such as those of Hera/Venus/Ashtarte, Baal Hammon/Saturn, Herakles/Melqart/Milkashtart, Kronos/Baal, and Asklepios/Eshmoun, are attested in votive inscriptions and sanctuaries from Tripolitania, Numidia, and elsewhere in North Africa, by the first to third centuries C.E. (Cadotte 2007, 28). Pairings of Hellenistic and Punic deities additionally reflected adaptive practices of the Greek-speaking traders who resided in Punic cities: some votives to Punic deities in Numidia and Tripolitania are inscribed in Greek and nominate dedicants with Hellenistic names and toponymics (*e.g.*, Dain 1933, no. 177, 178).[54] In many regions of Proconsularis and Tripolitania, Punic, Hellenistic, and Libyan deities had become nearly inextricable by the second century C.E.

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functions, though some of these may have contained greater proportions of animal to human remains (Greene 1997, 158–159). Discussions of these cemeteries tend to dominate conversations about western Phoenician cult generally, but it is uncertain whether modern scholars' emphases on regional human sacrifice are proportional to the significance of those practices in dedicants' lives. The names and symbols associated with these practices, however, reflect distinctly Levantine features.

[53] For more extensive treatment of the subject, see Cadotte (2007).

[54] In such cases, a cultic devotee might have interpreted one deity's local incarnation as his own, while locals used distinct Hellenistic or Roman names for it. As Cadotte describes, "S'il est difficile de porter un jugement simple sur les religions nord-africaines, un réalité générale se dégage pourtant de cet examen attentif des différents dieux d'Afrique à l'époque romaine: ceux-qui, malgré des noms latins et en dépit de leurs vêtements gréco-romains, n'ont jamais véritablement perdu leur identité libyco-punique" (2007, 385).

C. *Romans and Roman Provincials*

Intertwined commercial and political concerns precipitated Rome's initial interest in North Africa. By 264 B.C.E., the Carthaginians had extended their empire through Africa's territories and grown powerful enough to provoke Rome's anxieties about Punic trade supremacy in the western and southern Mediterranean.[55] Rome challenged its southern neighbors in three Punic wars (246–146 B.C.E) and imposed crippling tributes on them after each defeat (Le Bohec 1996; Raven 1993, 38–39). Rome conclusively gained control over Carthage only after the last war in 146 B.C.E.,[56] but Rome's subsequent treatment of most North African kingdoms and territories responded to its individual relationships with them in and following the Punic wars (Rives 1995, 18; Appian *Num.*).[57] Only the city of Carthage, which had served as the epicenter of Carthage's former empire, did Rome punish exceptionally: Rome symbolically leveled Carthage's central Byrsa Hill.

Under Augustus's leadership, however, Rome took renewed and expanded interest in North Africa. Augustus officially consolidated the conquered "Africa Nova" and "Africa Vetus" and renamed the entire province "Africa Proconsularis." He established Roman law, language, and cult practices as official throughout the conquered region, and local citizens became eligible to participate in municipal cult.[58] Scipio's *devotio* in 146 B.C.E. had prohibited Roman settlement in Carthage for over one century, but Augustus's reconstitution of the Concordia Iulia Karthago encouraged a flourishing building program whose new

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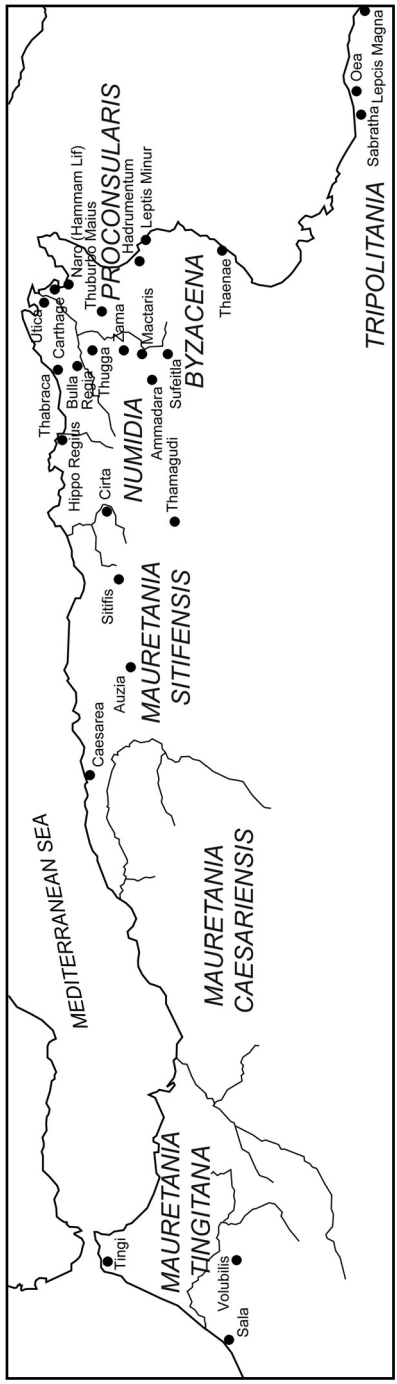
[55] The conditions leading up to these wars remain immensely complex. Le Bohec characterizes the Punic Wars as "un conflit majeur et mystérieuse." As Le Bohec emphasizes, this was a conflict between two empires, not two cities (1996, 9). More extensive treatment of these wars is found in Le Bohec's recent treatment (1996).

[56] Polybius notes that Rome and Carthage had already addressed these problems by signing an earlier treaty in 309 B.C.E. (Raven 1993, 37–38).

[57] The subsequent Roman wars with the Numidian Jugurtha, for example, do not appear to have impacted policies toward the rest of Africa, on which see Rives (1995, 20) and Appian (*Num.* 1).

[58] For example, Tertullian describes why Christians should not assume titles as magistrates, despite their eligibility, because their offices would be involved with the process of sacrifice in some way: *Cedamus itaque succedere alicui posse, ut in quoquo honore in solo honoris nomine incedat neque sacrificet neque sacrificiis auctoritatem suam accommodet, non hostias locet, non curas templorum deleget, non uectigalia eorum procuret, non spectacula edat de suo aut de publico aut edendis praesit, nihil sollemne pronuntiet uel edicat, ne iuret quidem; iam uero quae sunt potestatis, neque iudicet de capite alicuius uel pudore—feras enim de pecunia—neque damnet neque praedamnet, neminem uinciat, neminem recludat aut torqueat, si haec credibile est fieri posse* (*Idol.* 17.3; *CSEL* 20, 1890). See discussion in Rives (1995, 30).



Map 2. Administrative provinces of Roman North Africa in the fourth century C.E. Design courtesy of A. Stephenson

harbors, roads, fora, and temples imposed a Roman grid over most of the former Punic city (Rakob 2000, 14). By the middle of Augustus's reign, Carthage appears to have attained power as a trading empire comparable to that of flourishing Libyan *emporia* in the east (Strabo 17.3.15); greater numbers of traders and immigrants flooded the region to take advantage of its commercial climate.

Subsequent imperial policies fortified Rome's administrative control over the African territories. Domitian's division of Tripolitania and Africa Proconsularis into seven distinct and smaller provinces reflected the emperor's shift in administrative policy in the third century (Map 2). These new provincial designations corresponded with the size and economic, geographic, and demographic patterns of the regions, which he labeled as Tripolitania in the east and Proconsularis, Byzacena, Numidia, Mauretania Caesariensis, Mauretania Sitifensis, and Mauretania Tingitana in the west (Mattingly and Hitchner 1995). The smaller provincial divisions facilitated Roman administrative efficacy in Africa (Mattingly 1994).

1. *Demographic Impact*

The demographic impact of Rome's administrative presence in North Africa varied according to the Republic's and Empire's fluctuating military strategies, policies of citizenship, and interests in provincial government and markets. On the one hand, Rome desired to ensure ease of transportation, communication, and access to resources for its military; on the other hand, it sought to control local populations and to curtail mass migrations of indigenous populations throughout the region's interior. The African landscape still bears the physical marks of these efforts through the survival of Roman roads, aqueducts, centuriations, and barrier ditches (Jones and Mattingly 1980; Trousset 1997).

Roman citizens, soldiers, and veterans manned Roman borders and populated Roman towns, which served as Roman strongholds throughout Africa. Roman troops, including the IIIrd Augustan Legion and its auxiliaries, were imported to monitor the boundaries of former Carthaginian strongholds throughout Mauretania and Tripolitania (Mattingly and Hitchner 1995; Le Bohec 1987; 1989).[59] The Roman

[59] For discussion of Roman frontiers and the military in Africa, see Mann (1974, 508–33), Le Bohec (1991, 21–31), Euzennat (1977, 429–44), and Rebuffat (1979, 225–47).

Figure 2. Entrance of Temple of Jupiter, Thuburbo Maius, Tunisia
Photo: Author

army, then, became one vehicle for Rome's introduction of exogenous populations into Africa. The army's ranks included Italic soldiers, as well as those from other conquered provinces, such as Syria.[60] Still other soldiers, taken from local populations, served in local military garrisons, or those in other regions of North Africa.[61] Roman importations of exogenous soldiers and redistribution of African ones began to slowly impact local demographic patterns along the Roman frontier.

Coloniae inhabited by Roman veterans and citizens frequently replaced frontier bases and were built according to Roman standards of urban planning with a decumanus and cardo maximus (Lassère 1977, 262;

[60] For distributions of local soldiers in the IIIrd legion, see Shaw (1983, 144–152, especially Tables 2a, 2b, 3). According to Scheidel's calculations, between 30–41 C.E. and 69–177, C.E., the percentage of provincial, rather than Italia recruits in the Roman military increased by over fifty percent (Scheidel 1996, n. 18).

[61] The garrison of Bu Njem serves as one example of this. For extensive treatment, see Mattingly (1994) and Adams (1993). Bu Njem was a Roman garrison, which appears to have been built according to Punic measurements and local design. For discussion, see Mattingly (1994).

Watkins 2002, 87; Potter 1995).[62] Colonies such as Augustus's Concordia Iulia Karthago (Rakob 2000; *AE* 1981, 866) and Trajan's Colonia Ulpia Marciana Traiana Thamagudi reflect Roman principles of urban, construction and served as destinations for veteran soldiers and Roman citizens in African territories (Watkins 2002; Slim 1990, 169–171; Gros 1990, 548–570).

Demographic shifts in North Africa also responded to Rome's encouragement of immigration throughout the empire.[63] Caesar's revival of policies to encourage overseas settlement in citizen colonies had routed Roman emigration to colonies such as Africa and Spain (Rives 1995, 21; Lassère 1977, 171–193). New arrivals to the African provinces, however, did not necessarily originate in Rome itself: African exogenes could be broadly described as Roman provincials, but were actually of diverse origins and ethnic backgrounds (Mattingly and Hitchner 1995, 172).[64] More accurately, then, Rome served as the official catalyst for the expanded immigration to African shores and inland entrepôts of Italians, Greeks, Gauls, Noricans, Dalmatians, Syrians, and those of Baltic origin (Mattingly and Hitchner 1995; Lassère 1977).[65] Onomastic evidence that includes distinct toponymic and ethnic indices, discovered in Africa's cities and ports, most clearly attests the ongoing success of Caesar's initial policies of provincial settlement (Lassère 1977, 258). Under Rome's aegis, then, many came to Africa of their own volition for the same reasons as had the Phoenicians from the Levant: trade. The major port cities of Africa, such as Carthage, Oea, Sabratha, and Lepcis Magna, as well as major inland entrepôts, such as Sitifis and Volubilis, continued to serve as destinations for many of foreign origin (Euzennat 1971). Roman policies may not have officially encouraged

[62] As the frontiers shifted, so did the placement of military forces (Mattingly and Hitchner 1995, 174).

[63] In this discussion, I adapt vocabularies that originate in the demographic study of modern nation-states to describe ancient population shifts. This treatment classifies immigration as the incremental and varied migrations of individuals to North Africa from other regions of the Mediterranean. Here, immigration describes the act of moving from one location to another, but does not imply a positivistic search for a "better life" frequently associated with discussions of immigration from the nineteenth century through the present.

[64] See Lassère's discussion of the population of *coloniae* (1977, 79–233).

[65] Most evidence for population variation in North Africa derives from discussions of names, languages, and scripts in administrative and funerary inscriptions. Treatments of populations of eastern origin are found in Euzennat (1973), and from Gaul in Hamdoune (2001); for treatment of the importation of Syrian Roman legionaries, see Le Bohec (1987).

North African migration in all cases, but Rome's integration of Africa into the empire facilitated this immigration to a greater extent (Lassère 1977).

The Roman Empire's vigorous slave trade also redistributed populations throughout the Mediterranean. Some slaves were imported to Africa from overseas or were relocated within Africa to labor in the fields and *latifundia*. Still other slaves were taken and grown from local populations (Harris 1999). The precise degree to which the slave trade impacted local demographics remains difficult to discern:[66] epigraphic evidence only indirectly attests to the ultimate results of foreign slave importation. First-generation African slaves usually did not possess the economic means to commemorate their deceased; only their freed children, or descendants, did (Lassère 1977, 426–438).[67]

2. *Language Practices and Distribution*

Latin's infiltration of local language practices remained an important consequence of Rome's administrative presence in North Africa. During the early Republic, the use of Latin inscriptions in Africa appears to have been limited to Roman military frontiers, colonies, and administrative centers (Mattingly and Hitchner 1995). In earlier periods, the allocation of Roman names also appear limited to uses in towns guarded by the Roman military and *coloniae* with local Roman administrations (Rives 2001).[68] Latin spread quickly, however, as the dominant language of written communication in Africa Proconsularis. Remarkably, nearly all of the 60,000 inscriptions that remain from the African provinces are written in the Latin language and script (Bodel 2001, 8). North Africa's simultaneous embrace of the Latin language and the "epigraphic habit" are demonstrated by this rapid adoption of the Latin language and script throughout the African territories

[66] The precise proportion of imported to domestically-raised slaves remains unclear, but scholars have attempted to discern these distributions (Harris 1999). Roman farms, *salti*, were established in North Africa by *Italian* Romans, who wished to mine the local lands to export grain and olive oil to the northern Mediterranean. These farms required extensive slave labor.

[67] Lassère's evaluation of the complexities of Africa's populations remains authoritative (1977). Slaves, of course, were probably also exported from southern and western portions of Africa and in a variety of ways. Literary evidence for the Garamantes, for example, indicates their common entrapment and sale of Ethiopian neighbors (Mattingly 1994, 156).

[68] Establishment of imperial cult and local municipal offices accorded with directions of laws such as the Lex Ursonensis (*ILS* 6087). For discussion see Rives (1995, 28–29).

(MacMullen 1982; Meyer 1990). By the first and second century C.E., the Latin language had transformed from a means of selective administrative communication into the most popular language for widespread epigraphic use in North Africa.

The use of Latin, of course, shifted throughout time and place in North Africa. Immigration, the expansion of citizenship, regional indigenous language practices, and diachronic variations in local and exogenous Latin dialects all impacted the local renderings of Latin scripts and language. Latin's erratic adaptation assured its mutable manifestations—grammatical, paleographical, and orthographic standards rarely extended beyond Rome's administrative centers. Desires of Latin's inscribers to index features of the cultures with which Latin was associated, rather than a text's "correctness," therefore inform inscriptions' evaluations here.

Latin quickly integrated into pre-existing language systems throughout North Africa. Bilingual inscriptions of soldiers of foreign origin in Mauretania and trilingual inscriptions from *emporia* in Tripolitania demonstrate the integration of Latin as a valorized language alongside Punic and Greek.[69] Even local populations that retained idiosyncratic onomastic practices, such as Punico-African peoples and Libyans (IRT 246), began to integrate the Latin language and scripts in their votive inscriptions and funerary epitaphs (*CIL* 8.5209; 8.5217; 8.5220). In light of the region's varied linguistic past, this widespread adoption of Latin as Africa's dominant script and written language appears to be particularly culturally significant. To adapt Woolf's suggestion, Latin epigraphy may have served as the best available medium to express accomplishment, status, and identity, as well as access to notions of "elite" culture in Africa at this time (1996, 29). The inscribed Latin language became a desirable and unifying means of communication for increasing numbers of Africans, regardless of their demographic contexts.

While written attestations of the Latin language abound, certain related questions remain unanswered by the expanded Latin epigraphic record in Africa. How many Africans, for example, actually spoke Latin? Was Latin a language of writing and commemoration, while other languages and dialects were more frequently adopted for speech

[69] Examination of bilingual inscriptions has proved exceedingly useful in ongoing efforts to understand the Latin language, possibilities of local Latin dialects, and the use of Latin as a cultural index in Roman North Africa. See Adams (1990; 1994).

(Cooley 2002)? These and related questions are difficult to answer given the state of the archaeological record: the material record can only provide ambiguous evidence for spoken languages in antiquity. Degrees of Latin mastery, furthermore, are not necessarily conveyed by inscriptions, which were probably inscribed by trained (even by badly trained or badly skilled) specialists. Local preference to use Latin inscriptions to mark individuals' devotional activities and to commemorate the deceased, however, exemplify the definitive and rapid valorization of Latin in North Africa as an esteemed feature of Roman imperial culture.[70] Greek language and literature remained at the cornerstone of elite education in Africa through the fifth century, but it was Latin, not Greek, that was more frequently inscribed and probably spoken in Africa in late antiquity.

Latin texts do not account for all discernable language practices in Africa during the second through fourth centuries. Linguistic variation persisted among speakers and inscribers of Greek, Semitic, and Hamitic dialects among varied African populations. Greek, Punic, and Libyan inscriptions, for example, continued to remain more common in Tripolitania than in the west. Greek inscriptions from Africa Proconsularis and Mauretanias, meanwhile, were most commonly produced by exogenous populations, who clustered in port cities and trade entrepôts, such as Carthage, Constantine, and Sitifis. Many Greek language inscriptions include names with foreign toponymics and suggest that most of those who inscribed in Greek were of the most recent generations to arrive there (Lassère 1977). In the West, however, generations that inscribed in Latin steadily superceded those who had inscribed in Greek.[71]

One of the most significant features of Rome's rule, then, related to the ultimate expansion of its linguistic and epigraphic practices beyond the borders of its original military frontiers and colonies. Roman military policy, its Republic- and Empire-wide incentives for migration to citizen colonies, and its encouragement of trade swiftly transformed language practices throughout the African provinces.

3. *Transformations of Cult and Religion*

In earlier periods, Rome's impact on North African cult practices was initially confined to its military frontiers and colonies. The introduction

[70] For a related discussion, see Cooley (2002).
[71] I discuss this point more extensively in chapter four.

of Roman imperial cult into Africa with its related priesthoods and cultic practices, furthermore, mirrored processes of its adoption elsewhere: imperial cult in the western provinces was initially limited to practice by Italic Romans within those provinces (Fishwick 2002; Rives 1995).[72] The earliest archaeological evidence that attests to imperial priesthoods in North Africa supports this pattern: the distinctly Italic names of North African *flamines* suggest the priests' origins in Italy.[73] Other inscriptions from Lepcis Magna and elsewhere, however, indicate the subsequent adoption, practice, and interpretation of Roman imperial cult by local elites.[74]

North African devotional practices, however, rapidly integrated additional features of Roman cult. In the African west and east in Tripolitania, the *interpretatio* that had informed the fusing of Punic, Libyan, and Hellenistic pantheons also integrated additional Roman deities into pre-existing cults.[75] At times, Roman names for deities merged with those already revered: in the Libyan pantheon, for

[72] No evidence for imperial priesthoods has been discovered in Carthage, but both textual references, such as those in Apuleius (*Flor.* 16) and inscriptions, provide names for fifteen priests in the region of Proconsularis. Among these are *CIL* 8.14611, 8.12039 and *AE* 1964, 177. For additional discussion of the implication of such inscriptions for understandings of provincial Imperial cult, see Fishwick (2002, 127–128).

[73] Texts that attest to the local presence of the specialized *flamines* signify the appearance of imperial cult in both Africa Pronconsularis and Tripolitania. One inscription that Rives dates to 33 B.C.E. describes a Roman *flamen* Saturninus in Avitina *CIL* 8.25844 (Rives 2001, 425 and n. 3). *Flamines* are also attested in towns such as Hippo Regius, Volubilis, and Chardimau in the first centuries C.E., and one *flamina*, in Thougga, in later periods (Rives 2001 426, n. 6). For additional discussion, see Rives (2001).

[74] Traditional understandings of imperial cult in the Empire rely on the particular dynamics regions of its adoption: while imperial cult was readily integrated into pre-existing cult practices in the eastern Greek-speaking provinces of the empire, it served as part of the "Romanization" process in the west, and remained more distinct from "native" traditions (Rives 2001, 427). Rives, for example, highlights certain inscriptions from Lepcis Magna that exemplify the degree to which imperial and Punic cult elided—it appears that the Punic elite simply added offices of imperial cult to their pre-existing cultic offices (2001, 433). Rives, however reads one inscription to imply that, to however some degree, imperial priesthoods were easily adapted into African Punic cults. He translates the inscription to read: "two *flamines* of Augustus Caesar. Iddibal son of Aris and ʿAdbmelqart son of Hannibal, and the *sufets*…." As Rives argues, "The Roman-style imperial priesthood has simply been added to the old offices of *shofet* or *sufes* and *addir ʿazarim*, translated as *praefectus sacrorum*: institutionally the city obviously remained more Punic than Roman…" (2001, 434).

[75] For discussions of connections between Roman presence and indigenous cult, see discussion of dynamics in Britain in Derks (1998, 202–207). The process of eliding local and Roman worship in Africa has much in common with comparable dynamics in other regions of the empire, such as Britain and Gaul.

example, Ammon became Jupiter Ammon. The metamorphosis of the cult of Baal-Hammon into the cult of Saturn remains a thorough and important case study of this dynamic.[76] Temples for local deities often integrated Roman deities into pre-existing cult centers. In Lepcis Magna, the temple to Liber Pater equated Liber Pater with Shadrapta; this construction signified that Liber was subsumed as one of Lepcis's patron deities along with Mlk'Ashtart (Rives 2001, 435).[77] Constructions of new temples frequently reflected related patterns of *interpretatio* in cultic and devotional practice.[78]

Other characteristic features of Roman devotion were swiftly incorporated into North African commemorative contexts. The invocation *D.M.S.* or *Di(is) Manibus Sacrum* (literally, "sacred to the divinized ancestors"), was a popular incipit in Roman Latin commemorative inscriptions. The convention was immediately adopted in most African Latin epitaphs from the first to the early fourth centuries C.E. It is unclear what additional commemorative practices might have accompanied this dedicatory ligature: the rites or practices associated with the *Manes* in Africa are unknown and remain more obscure than their Roman analogues. Rapid emulation of this Latin commemorative convention to mark the deified ancestors of the deceased, however, might relate to preexisting Libyan and Punico-African proclivities for ancestor worship. The prominence of this ligature, then, might suggest the diachronic popularity of ancestor worship (in whatever guise) throughout North Africa, or it might reflect Africans' wholesale embrace of Latin commemorative practices. The rapid prominence of this literary convention may demonstrate either or both of these possibilities.

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[76] See LeGlay (1988) and Cadotte (2007). Also see Mattingly and Hitchner (1995, n. 429). For images related to Saturn cult in later periods in Africa Proconsularis, see Ben Abdallah (1999, 17). Still, other local cults appear to have resisted attraction with Roman deity (Fentress 1978).

[77] The earliest African Christian writers, Tertullian and Minucius Felix, list some of the deities most revered in various regions of North Africa. As Tertullian critiques, every province and nearly every city had their gods—"Africa has its Caelestis and Mauretania has its princes (*reguli sui*)" (*Apol.* 24.7 = *Nat.* 2.8.5 // Minucius Felix *Oct.* 24.1). Tertullian alleges that ruler worship was practiced in the Mauretanias. If so, as Rives argues, the adaptation of Roman emperor cult in Mauretania may have aligned with more traditional cults of ruler worship in this region (Rives 2001).

[78] The diversity of temple constructions within towns of Tripolitania and elsewhere reflected the juxtaposition of Punico-African and Roman cult traditions: some buildings reflected classical Roman design, while others maintain traditional "Semitic" types (Smadja 2005; Mattingly and Hitchner 1995, n. 433).

Rome's presence in Africa and the high degree of connectivity of its empire also facilitated Christianity's introduction into North Africa's range of devotional practices. The origins of Christian presence in Africa are unclear, but Christianity appears to have taken hold in Africa quite early. Rome's persecution of Christians on African shores, in fact, appears to have nearly coincided with the earliest evidence for Christian populations in the region. Records of Christian martyrs in Scillium and Carthage date to the late second through early third centuries (Shaw 1992, 9) and Tertullian's earliest treatises date to the early 200s. By the middle of the third century, bishoprics had already appeared in seventy towns in Numidia, Africa Proconsularis, and the Mauretanias (Mattingly and Hitchner 1995, 208; Eck 1983). Archaeological and epigraphic remains of early churches and *martyria* also signify the advanced development of Christian communities in Carthage, Cherchel, Sitifis, and Constantine by this time. During this period, uses of Christian symbols, such as the chirho, alpha and omega inscriptions, and crosses, grew increasingly popular to mark epitaphs, and to adorn votive inscriptions and architectural elements in churches and basilicas.[79]

Christianity had permeated the Roman Empire by the late fourth century, but the Roman administration was forced to contend with problems its previous policies had precipitated among Africa's Christian communities years earlier. A wave of officially sanctioned Roman violence against Christians had resumed in Africa in 303–305, just before Constantine's "conversion."[80] After the Roman persecutions had ended, the church had faced the problem of how to respond to allegedly "lapsed" Christians—those who had had complied with Roman persecutors to avoid punishment.[81] Distinct Christian responses to these

[79] Martyrs' epitaphs and tombs were deliberately marked and elaborately decorated (*e.g.*, Ennabli 1999, 19, 71). Occasionally, too, Christians identified themselves as "Chrestianae" in epitaphs. One third- or fourth-century epitaph that hangs in the Sousse museum, for example, describes a family whose names are accompanied by the adjective "Chrestinus." For Christian epitaphs in these and subsequent periods, see Ennabli (2000) and for examples of architecture of churches and *martyria*, see Baratte, Bejaoui, and Ben Abdallah (1999) and Duval (1982).

[80] In the late third century, Christians suffered persecution at the hands of the Romans in Africa for their resistance to participation in imperial cult. Both Tertullian (*Fug.*) and Cyprian addressed problems of martyrdom, and Cyprian himself, once bishop of Carthage, died as a martyr. For discussion of later martyrdom traditions, see Frend (2004).

[81] Conflict over the appointment of the bishop of Carthage in 312–313 only heightened this controversy. Most African bishops resisted the nomination of a certain Caecilianus as bishop of Carthage, because they asserted that a *traditor* had ordained

lapsi created permanent fissures within the African church (Shaw 1992, 10).[82] The emerging orthodox Christian voice in Africa is characterized by its related excision from the "Catholic" fold of African Christians whom they cast as Donatists—those who had taken a harsher position against Christians who had lapsed.[83] Despite Catholic persecutions and polemics against their allegedly "non-orthodox" counterparts, these African Christians may have remained numerically dominant over Catholics in rural regions throughout the fourth and fifth centuries (Shaw 1992, 12).[84]

Careful readings of literary texts and examinations of the archaeological record illuminate certain distinguishing features of African Christian devotional practices. One of these appears to relate to the popularity of martyr traditions in Carthage and Numidia. Both the proliferation of Catholic and Donatist martyrdom accounts and the bold veneration of cults of the martyrs were particularly characteristic of African Christianity from an early period (Tilley 1990). Archaeological evidence, too, clearly documents efforts to elaborate martyrs' tombs; *martyria*, martyr shrines, were frequently built around the tombs of particular martyrs (Duval 1982, II, 582–587) and epitaphs explicitly marked martyr's graves as loci of devotion through the sixth century C.E. (*e.g.*, Ennabli 1999, no. 39 = Bardo Inv. 5240/1; Duval 1982, II,

him. Militiades, bishop of Rome, commissioned the advocacy of Caecilianus over another Numidian candidate, Majorinus (Frend 1952; Shaw 1992, 10).

[82] Catholics cast as "Donatists" those African Christians who had followed Donatus, Majorinus' successor. The Roman Catholic choice to support Caecilianus's nomination as bishop enraged African Christians, who believed that Caecilianus had been ordained improperly by a *traditor* (Augustine *Ep.* 4.4.4.8). This division enforced distinctions between the "Catholics" who supported Caecilianus and those African Christians who did not (Shaw 1992, 12).

[83] For discussions of Catholic relations with Donatists, see Augustine (*Ep.* 58) and on the *circumcelliones*, Augustine (*Ep.* 88). Donatist martyr accounts document Catholic persecution of African Christians (Donatists) in African cities (Tilley 1990).

[84] Particular events, such as the Councils of Carthage, only intensified division between Catholic and African Christianity and refined the acceptable collective orthodox voice of Catholic Christianity (411, 417). For detailed discussion of the events of the Councils of Carthage, see Shaw (1992, 12). Augustine's writings and later Roman legal texts continued to assail the "heresies" of Donatism as among those most dangerous to the church (Brown 1968; Fredriksen 1995). Perhaps, the anxiety of this orthodox Christian voice may point to the complexities of Christian practice in North Africa and to the the survival of African Christian populations. The practices of African Christian populations remain difficult to discern from the orthodox Christians' strongly polemical literary record and the obscure archaeological one. Great discrepancies remained, however, between the singular orthodox voice of African Christian writers and laws, and the local variations in Christian practice in African territories through the later Roman period.

589).[85] Augustine's frequent complaints about inappropriate drunken and riotous behavior at the sites of martyrs' graves under the auspices of their adoration remain illustrative; his repeated struggles against the unruly practices of martyr veneration probably reflect the pervasiveness of the practices of martyr cult among African Christian populations through late antiquity (Brown 1981, 32–29).[86]

The polemical voice and interests of African Christian writers, however, only selectively represent the range of operative Christian devotional practices in North Africa in antiquity. While writers stated that martyrs' tombs were not supposed to be flagrantly venerated, archaeological evidence indicates that they were. While writers cautioned that followers of Christ were not to venerate other divinities, early Christian epitaphs dedicated their deceased to the *Dis Manibus* (*e.g.*, *Bardo*, no. 28, 61) And while Christian writers such as Tertullian and Cyprian cautioned Christians not to behave like Jews, archaeological evidence attests to the visual interlacing of Jewish and Christian devotional practices and symbols in North Africa.[87] The emerging "orthodox" dicta of the church narrate a clear and bifurcated early church history in Africa, but the archaeological record attests to the variety of local Christian practices in Africa during the Roman period. The metaphor of *interpretatio*, so useful to describe the fluidity of pagan devotional practice in Africa, remains an equally helpful means to approach the devotional practices associated with the emergence of North African Christianity.

Christianity's entry into North Africa had transformed the already complex range of regional devotional practices. While Africa was the earliest of the western provinces to adopt Christianity, the diverse responses it engendered among local populations were largely unattested in other regions of the Mediterranean. Certain distinguishing features of African Christianity, including its fervent practice and regionally

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[85] Both recitations from the *acta martyrorum* and feasts at martyrs' tombs, *laetitiae*, involved public participation. For treatment, see Fredriksen (1995, 301) and Frend (1982, 154–167). Epitaphs for earlier martyrs explicitly described the precise conditions of their demises; a plaque from Haïdra reads: *Gloriosissimus beatissimis(que) martribus qui persecutione Diocletiane et Maximian[ni] divinis legibus passi sunt, quorum corpora, hoc loco deposita, apud Deum in Aeternum manen[t] […] felix semper vivat qui intentissime legerit; felicior qui Deo omnipotenti per Cristum eius tota fide craediderit!* (Ennabli 1999, 73; no. 39). Also see discussions in Shaw (1993) and Kaufman (1994). Duval devotes particular attention to the "Sociologie des Dédicants" (1982, II. 590).

[86] Augustine calls such behavior an insult (*Ep.* 17.4, 22.4, 29.2–3, 9).

[87] For additional discussion, see chapter five.

distinctive veneration of martyr cults, most probably relate to the survival of North Africa's deeply synthetic and adaptive cultic traditions through later Roman periods.

D. *Vandals*

Subsequent stages in Africa's demographic and cultural development related to the reorganization of the later Roman Empire (Mitchell 2007). By the fifth century, the numbers of soldiers present to police Africa's eastern and western borders had declined exceedingly (Mattingly 1994, 186) and the weakening of Africa's frontier had accompanied the shift of Roman power from the west to the east in Constantinople. By 429 C.E., Vandal troops had easily entered Mauretania through Spain, and in 439 the Vandals jubilantly seized Carthage (Clover 1982, 2). Geiseric and his soldiers took over Roman administrative centers there and confiscated the grand Roman estates that had proliferated in the countryside in the end of the fourth century (Modéran 2002). Inscriptions and architecture attest to one century of Vandal presence in African cities, such as Carthage, Sitifis, Ammaedara and Cherchel.[88]

1. *Demographic Impact*

In some ways, the Vandal invasion did not necessarily interrupt the demographic and cultural characteristics of the late ancient African city. During the period of Vandal domination, many public structures retained their previous Roman uses and Roman forms of education appear to have been maintained (Clover 1982, 9). The Vandals' systematic reuse of infrastructure, however, diminishes the available archaeological evidence to determine the demographic impact of their local presence. Evidence for this period remains limited by both ambiguities in the archaeological record and the opacity of the available literary one.[89]

[88] In certain cases, it is difficult to determine whether building programs were precipitated directly by Vandals or by others in the fifth century. For a case study, see Potter (1995, 36) and Duval, Slim, Bonifay, Piton, and Bourgeois (2002).

[89] Some literary sources derive from this period of Vandal occupation in Africa. Victor of Vita's work, *Historia persecutionis africanae provinciae*, from the middle to late 480s, describes Catholic persecutions and events during Geiseric and Huneric's reigns. The *Codex Salmasianus*, a manuscript of the seventh–eighth century, embeds texts of

2. *Language Practices*

Latin remained a dominant language in Africa, but the Vandals' presence precipitated the introduction of additional dialects and languages to the region. Vulgar Latin became increasingly common in inscriptions from the Vandalic period (*e.g.*, Bejaoui 1999, fig. 7). Vandals' use of the Gothic Bible in Africa and their distinctly polyglot linguistic history also accompanied their importation to the region members of its diverse coalition of Germanic Vandals and Iranian Alans. Names included in the title list of Vandal kings, *Rex Wandalorum et Alanorum*, exemplify the composite linguistic and onomastic practices that Vandals probably carried into North Africa (Clover 1982, 3; Wolfrum 1967–1973, 76–89).

3. *Transformations of Cult and Religion*

Vandal control also precipitated change in African cultic and religious practices. Vandals practiced Arian Christianity, which may not have spread beyond the boundaries of Vandal populations. The mere presence of Arianism in Africa, however, proved intolerable to local Catholic Christians. Catholics, furthermore, described great and repeated sufferings at the hands of Arian Christians: upon entry, Arian Vandals had ejected the Catholic Bishop Quodvultdeus from his seat in Carthage and displaced Catholics by appropriating their basilicas for their own uses (Bejaoui and Ben Abdallah 1999, 233). Vandals' Arian Christian presence, however, does not appear to have impacted all African Christian populations equally. Donatist populations, who had been previously marginalized by the urban Catholic elite, appear to have remained in rural regions during this period. To the Roman east, the sting of Arian Christianity's presence was amplified by the facility of its rupture of Catholic Christians' fragile hold on Africa.

E. *Byzantines*

Roughly one century after Geiseric's invasion, Justinian I advanced Byzantine forces to dispel Vandal populations from Africa. He promulgated

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sixth-century writers from Carthage. For discussions of problems of historiography that relate to these and other literary sources, see Clover (1982, 6). Poetry from this period also demonstrates language practices associated with Vandal presence in North Africa (George 2004, 136).

an edict in 534 to commemorate the recent Byzantine conquest and to establish an African Praetorian Prefecture under his auspices:

> Before all things [is] this, which now Almighty God has deigned to indicate through us on behalf of his praise and name; this has exceeded all miraculous works which occurred in the present age: that Africa should recover her freedom through us in so short a time, having been captured by the Vandals one hundred and five years ago—Vandals who were at once enemies of souls and bodies (*Cod. justin.* 1.27.1.1.).[90]

Justinian's objective to conquer the African provinces from the Vandals in 533 was framed as an important quest to fight for the "souls and bodies" of the Catholic Christians the Vandal enemies had displaced (*qui animarum fuerant simul hostes et corporum*). Military action had been decisive: Justinian's appointee, the general Belisarius, along with his Byzantine forces, had successfully entered Africa to reconquer the land from the "heretics" in 533.[91] Belisarius's appointment of Solomon as general assured Rome's consolidation and control of the reconquered lands.[92]

1. *Demographic Impact*

The impact of Byzantine soldiers' presence on local populations appears various. The African landscape quickly bore the marks of Byzantine presence: as directed by Justinian, Byzantine soldiers built fortifications throughout the African territories (Procopius, *Aed.* 6) and attempted to bolster Christian orthodoxy through the restoration of churches to their former Catholic constituents (Cameron 1982, 39). Other architectural features of Byzantine presence included the construction of municipal buildings and the commission of distinctively eastern decorative art and mosaic within them (Dunbabin 1982, 190–192).

2. *Language Practices and Distribution*

The presence of Byzantine soldiers erratically impacted the regional lingustic practices in North Africa. During this period, for example, the

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[90] Translation from Clover (1982, 1).

[91] These and subsequent campaigns are recorded in Procopius's account of the Vandalic Wars (*e.g., Bell. Vand.* 2.7.13).

[92] Literary sources of Procopius and Corripus I remain important to consider, but are of limited assistance in the documentation of these wars. See the discussion in Cameron (1982, 39).

Greek of eastern Byzantine soldiers became increasingly common in the epigraphic record of late ancient Tripolitania and western Africa. It is unclear whether Byzantine soldiers were directly responsible for most documented Greek language use, or whether the increased use of epigraphic Greek demonstrates more widespread trends among other African populations. What is clear is that the epigraphic record, still dominated by Latin, grew increasingly crowded by the use of Byzantine Greek in the sixth century.

3. *Transformations of Cult and Religion*

Other features of eastern Mediterranean culture impacted local devotional practices. The proliferation of Byzantine styles of basilica architecture in the sixth century demonstrates one facet of North Africa's adoption of eastern methods of constructing sacred space (Ghalia 2002, 213). Donative inscriptions also gained greater popularity in the mosaics of African churches and basilicas during this period; this pattern may suggest that distinctly eastern practices of euergetism increasingly manifested themselves in African basilicas and churches in the sixth century.

Byzantine troops had entered North Africa with an explicitly intertwined political and theological agenda: to reclaim the place of the Catholic Church in Africa and to restore the Empire's control over its western frontier. Once Byzantine troops had conquered the Vandals in Africa, the promulgation of laws from Constantinople reflected the eastern Roman Empire's desire to rid Africa of unwanted Vandalic Arian Christians, as well as their former enemies, Donatists and other heretics—some of whom, allegedly, still retained control over the lands and buildings claimed by orthodox Christians (*e.g.*, Linder 1997, no. 69). In response, both Byzantine troops and Justinian's edicts asserted eastern Roman control over African and Arian lands. The Catholic Church's goal of supremacy in Africa, however, was never fully realized—local intra-Christian disputes were permanently quelled only by the Arab conquest of the region, one century later.[93]

[93] The composite nature of African cultures persisted, but certain dominant features of the Roman west had faded by this point. The cultural landscape had so changed under this sequence of Vandal and Byzantine direction that by this time, as Averil Cameron has suggested, much of "Latin culture in the old sense was dying out" (1982, 52).

From periods of Phoenician settlement through the Arab conquest, African populations had responded creatively to constant and various shifts in political and economic organization. North Africa's cultural climate therefore never acquired placidity or demographic stability as did some other Roman provinces in the east or west. It remained, rather, a land of demographic mixture and cultural complexity that had selectively and erratically embraced standards of onomastic, linguistic, and devotional expression from both its local and hegemonic cultures.

F. *Jews*

North Africa's regionally varied culture furnishes a challenging medium for the interpretation of evidence for local Jewish populations. How does one begin to situate Jewish populations diachronically within North Africa's complex and fluctuating cultural environment? While the endeavor poses a challenge, archaeological evidence indicates that Jewish populations in Africa responded to many of the same cultural forces as did their African neighbors.[94] Just as variations in the practices of North African Jewish populations might relate to their distinct origins, so too do they relate to shifts in time and place in Africa. Evidence for any African minority population requires evaluation according to the broader cultural framework of the region it occupies. North African Jewish evidence justifies comparable treatment.

1. *Demographic Impact*

The origins of Jewish presence in North Africa remain somewhat enigmatic. Most African evidence for Jews is archaeological and epigraphic

[94] North Africa's varied cultural climate has inspired countless studies of its demographic situation. Scholars of North Africa have historically been intrigued by the region's complicated social, linguistic, and religious dynamics. Lassère's important work, which collected and organized data for North African autochthonous and immigrant groups (1977), has inspired countless analyses of archaeological, epigraphic, and literary evidence for individual groups within North Africa (Le Bohec 1986; Hitchner 1993). While most of these populations, which include Libyans, Phoenicians, and Punics, have been explored in this way (Mattingly 1987, 71–81), as have immigrant groups, such as Germans, Britons, Greeks, Egyptians (Lassère 1977, 388–437), few scholars have attempted comparable analysis of Jewish populations in the western regions of North Africa. Lassère's treatment remains the most thorough and contextual of these (1977, 415–426).

and postdates the late second century C.E. Due to the absence of clear literary texts and the irregularity of archaeological record, scholars have resorted to conjecture to explain Jews' origins in Africa.[95] Some scholars date the Jews' arrival in North Africa to the sixth century B.C.E., when Babylonians destroyed the first temple in Jerusalem and exiled Judah's elite.[96] Others rely on late ancient texts to assert that Jews had first begun to live in North Africa sometime before the destruction of the second temple (Simon 1962, 51; Chouraqui 1973, 9). Still others have suggested that Judaeans first settled in Phoenician ports along the North African coast after they had participated in their southwestern travels and trade (Le Bohec 1981, 201; Juster 1914, 2.264, n. 5; *cf.* Hirschberg 1974).[97] These older hypotheses, however, depend both on generous interpolation of speculative accounts in the *Josippon* and on Christian texts of only dubious reliability. Scarce evidence grounds any of these hypotheses.[98]

Some Jews in North Africa *may* have possessed origins in the Levant, as Juster, Simon, and Le Bohec have speculated. After all, many others

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[95] The varied terminology here (Jew versus Judaean versus Israelite) responds to the events of Levantine history and contingent understandings of Jewish cultural identity. In this discussion "Israelite" refers to the group of people linked to a centralized cult in Jerusalem who inhabited the region of ancient Israel before the destruction of the first temple by the Neo-Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. Those who were exiled at that time are described as "Judahites" because they inhabited the southern kingdom of Judah that the Babylonians had specifically conquered—their northern neighbors, the "Israelites", were conquered by the Neo-Assyrians over one century earlier and were ambiguously affected by this particular conquest. Designations of "Judaean" refer to populations who inhabited the region of ancient Israel, but during Persian and Roman control. In later periods, of course, this term grew to be applied more broadly to inhabitants of other regions of the Mediterranean, through the term Ιουδαῖος or *Iudaeus*. The meaning of the word shifted commensurately. For the complexities of defining these terms, see the previous discussion in chapter one.

[96] Jews on the Tunisian island of Djerba still trace their ancestry to the Israelites exiled after the Neo-Babylonian destruction of the first temple in Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. For discussion, see Chouraqui (1973, 8) and Juster (1914, 1.204, n. 2–3).

[97] Jean Juster similarly postulates that Jews had originally settled along the African coastline to serve an important commercial function among the Phoenicians (Juster 1914, 2.264, n. 5). Chouraqui asserts that Christian discussions of Jews' uses of Hebrew substantiate the hypothesis that they had come directly from Palestine to Africa before Aramaic replaced Hebrew as the common language in that region (1973, 8–9). Rives, too, discusses related texts in Tertullian and Augustine (1998, 216, n. 88). Many of these hypotheses, however, do not consider the polemical features of these particular reports.

[98] For additional discussion, see Rives (1995, 216). The *Josippon,* probably composed in the tenth century and recopied extensively, remains of dubious historical reliability (Zeitlin 1963, 277). Also see Setzer (1997, 188).

who settled in North Africa were of Levantine origin. A fuller exposition of African Jews' origins can only be completed in the following chapters, but to this point, there remains no indication that the earliest Jewish immigrants to Africa came from Persian Judah or Roman Palestine. No epitaphs or records explicitly attest the inclusion of Jews in the Roman military, but other Jews probably arrived in African lands in ways conventional for other African exogenous populations, such as Italians, Greeks and Egyptians—through trade and slave sale.[99] Obvious discrepancies between Jewish epigraphic practices in Italy and North Africa discourage facile assumptions of direct connections between African and Italian Jewish populations, but some Jews probably came to North Africa from Ostia, Puteoli, and Rome—frequent partners in African trade (Rives 1995, 217). Rome's intensified presence in North Africa in the second and first centuries B.C.E. ushered the influx of exogenous populations into Africa from throughout the Mediterranean. Jews probably arrived in similar ways and for similar reasons.

Tripolitanian Jews may have migrated to western Africa under different conditions. Jews had retained a powerful presence in Cyrenaica until the revolts of the second century and Trajan's violent responses to them (Hirschberg 1974, 30).[100] Some Jews probably fled from Cyrenaica and settled along the Tripolitanian/Byzacene border; the distribution of finds in these regions supports this possibility. Additionally, general similarities in the scripts, languages, names, and writing style between older Cyrenaican, and later Tripolitanian and Byzacene Jewish epitaphs suggests that some Jews in the eastern portion of Africa Proconsularis and western Tripolitania may have been of eastern Libyan origins.[101]

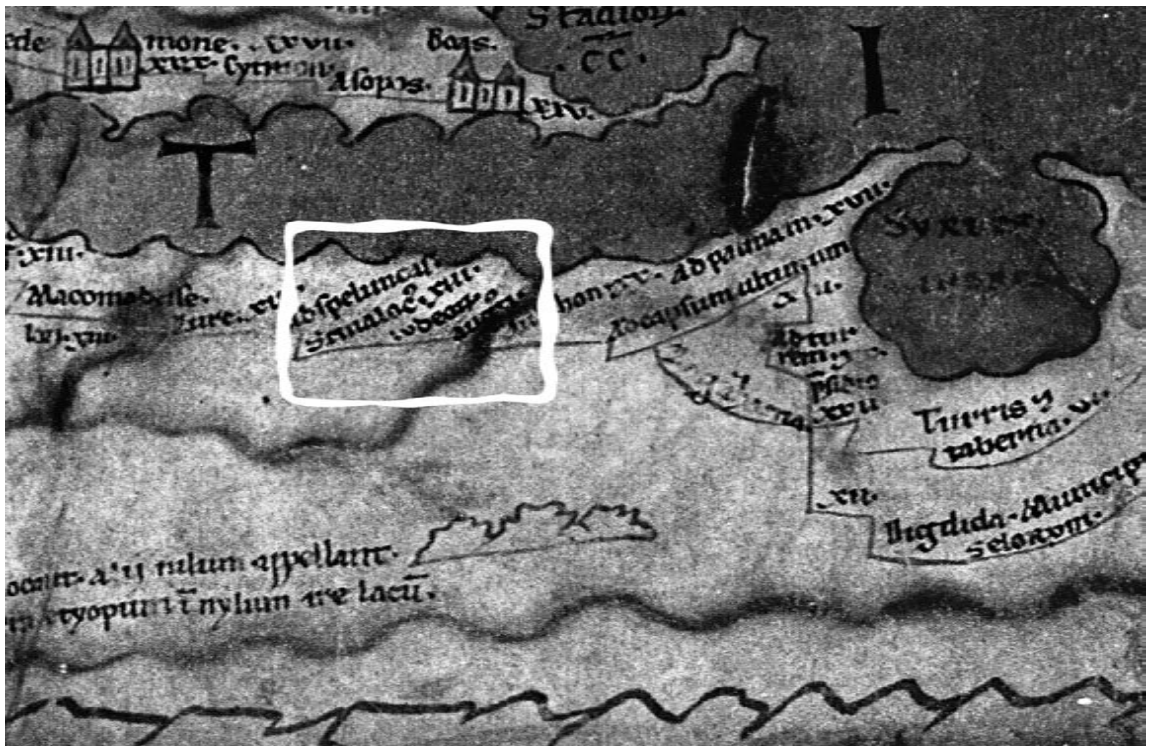
A toponym on the Peutinger Map (Map 3) suggests an additional possible source of Jewish presence in Africa—as a relocated corporation of the emperor's slaves.[102] A point marked along the Libyan coast and to

[99] A positivistic interpretation of the toponym on the Peutinger Table (Table VII, section I) would support the latter hypothesis. For discussions of complexities of addressing demographics and the Roman slave trade, see Harris (1999).

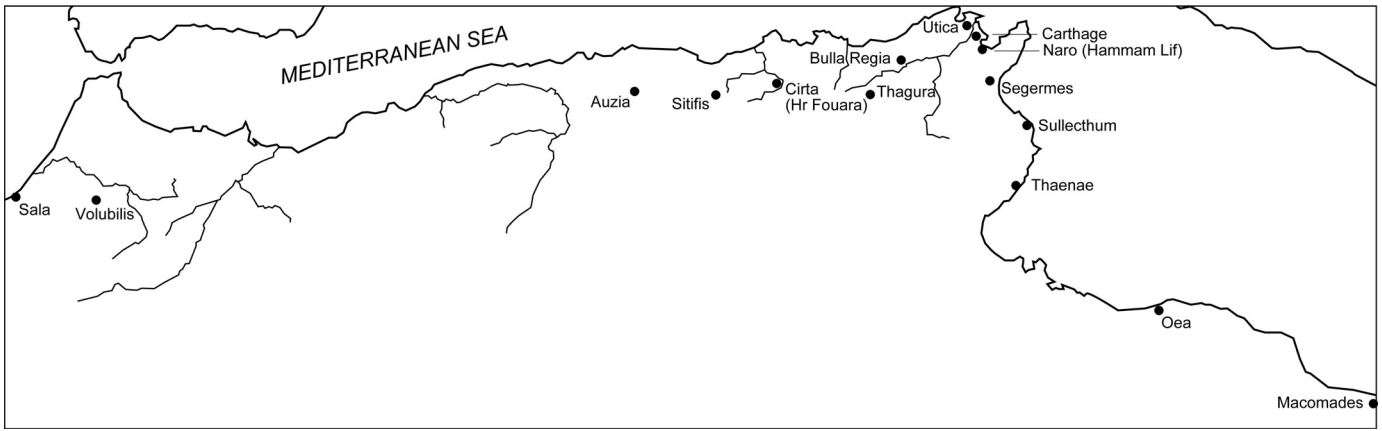
[100] Eusebius (*Hist eccl.* 4,2) and compare Dio Cassius (*Hist.* 69.13.1–2). Hirschberg, however, notes: "The portion of Dio Cassius' work that contains this passage has come to us only in a summary by Xiphilinius, an 11th century copyist and epitomist, and the exaggerations in the account of those cruelties are ascribed by some to the latter because Dio himself is regarded as an objective writer, free from Judeophobia" (1974, 30).

[101] Comparable scripts of Jewish epitaphs from Cyrene, which demonstrate distinct onomastic and linguistic features, are demonstrated in drawings of Gray (1956, 51).

[102] See Lassère's related discussion (1985, 69).



Map 3. Toponym of "Locus Iudeorum Augusti"; detail on Peutinger Table VII, Section I. ©Austrian National Library Vienna, Picture Archive



Map 4. Distribution of finds associated with Jewish populations in Roman North Africa. Design courtesy of author and A. Stephenson

the east of Lepcis Magna reads "Locus Iudeorum Augusti" (Peutinger Table VII–IIX) and some scholars have suggested that this "Place of the Jews of Augustus" (detail, Map 3) might designate a *saltus* where Jewish slaves were brought to work on behalf of the Roman emperor (Lassère 1985, 68–69). Scholars have argued about the significance of this toponym, but the site itself has never been fully explored or excavated. Scarce assessments can be made of this possibility without additional archaeological exploration.[103]

Even a successful quest to determine the origins of Jews in North Africa, however, would ultimately reveal little about Jews' lives in Africa once they had arrived and integrated. Jewish populations, just like many others in North Africa, probably originated in territories elsewhere in the Mediterranean. Improved understandings of these Jewish populations of North Africa and their relationships to their North African neighbors depend on more precise comparisons of their collective material records. Identifiable practices, rather than etiologies, furnish useful information about the cultural situations of North Africa's Jews.

The only certainty is that Jews had begun to gradually establish themselves in North Africa's major cities and trade centers by the late second century C.E. Discoveries of Jewish inscriptions in Volubilis, Sitifis, Constantine, Carthage, and Oea attest Jews' widespread presence in these cities by the third century C.E. Smaller finds, too, indicate Jewish presence in Carthage and elsewhere; a series of molded lamps, decorated with menorot, are particularly associated with Jews in North Africa (Lund 1995).[104] Inscriptions that contain particularly Jewish names, Jewish symbolization, and adjectives (*Iudaeus*) have enabled scholars to identify as "Jewish" clusters of burials at Gammarth and Oea and isolated funerary stelai throughout Africa Proconsularis, the Mauretanias and Tripolitania.[105] Definitive attestations of Jewish pres-

[103] The Peutinger Table, one of the oldest maps of the ancient Mediterranean, survives only in a fourteenth-century copy. Some scholars, who mistrust the Table's antiquity and authenticity call into question its reliability for historical purposes.

[104] Many of these were discovered in Carthage and throughout the African territories. The lamps are of the late Roman period, and some bear decorations in which the central motif is a menorah (*e.g.*, Le Bohec 1981a, nos. 82–92). Multiples of these lamps continue to be discovered in excavations at Carthage, according to Roald Docter (2007). Most of the African Jewish lamps retained in private collections are of unknown provenance, but some collectors have published their photographs of some of these, *e.g.*, Adler (2004).

[105] North African "magical texts," occasionally discovered in their places of original deposit, also occasionally make reference to "IAO" or "Yahweh"—the Latin transcrip-

ence, then, pervade the North African landscape (Map 4). Distributions of epigraphic texts and archaeological evidence, furthermore, suggest the possibilities both of regional and cultural variations within the Jewish North African populations and of Jews' differing circumstances of adaptation into North Africa's regional and transregional cultures.[106]

2. *Language Practices and Distribution*

Jewish populations' valorization of regionally popular practices of naming, language, and commemoration suggest how aligned were language practices of Jewish populations in Africa with those of their local cultural environments. One of Augustine's letters implies that Jews in Tripolitania spoke or understood Hebrew (*Ep.* 71), but the epigraphic record cannot substantiate this assertion. Jewish inscriptions throughout Africa Proconsularis and Tripolitania primarily include Latin, Greek, and, on occasion, only limited Hebrew. The subjects of naming and language practices are explored in greater depth in the following two chapters.

3. *Transformations of Cult and Religion*

Evidence available to describe North African Jewish devotional practices remains scarce. Jewish artifacts, art, and inscriptions have more rarely been uncovered in devotional than commemorative contexts. In the late nineteenth century, a French military unit was responsible for uncovering one building, which its mosaics labelled "Sancta Sinagoga," in the modern Tunisian town of Hammam Lif (Biebel 1936, 540); I discuss this building and its mosaics in chapter five. Ensuing excavation of the building yielded figurative mosaic carpets and inscribed mosaic panels. Though the most elaborate of these panels were destroyed during excavation, some of them remain intact in museums in the United

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tions of the hypocoristicon and name of the Jewish God. These references to Jewish terminology and deity, and occasionally angelology, remained common in incantation texts during this period throughout the Mediterranean; most North African examples signify the conventions of the pan-Mediterranean genre (Audollent 1967, 287–407; Gager 1992, 55, n. 36). None of these texts exhibit features that seem to demonstrate locally idiosyncratic references to Jewish terminology or evocations of IAO's name in the *voces magicae*. It appears that these texts' references were equally derived from the recipe books for spells from throughout the Mediterranean (Gager 1992, 55).

[106] For comparable discussion of Jews from Cyrenaica, see Gray (1956).

States and Tunisia.[107] Discussions of devotional practices associated with this synagogue are limited to those discernible in this building's decoration, construction, and inscription.

The majority of evidence for Jews and Jewish religious practice in North Africa is literary, but only a small proportion of it remains particularly relevant for the discussion of African Jewish populations and their devotional practices. Roman legal texts, for example, specifically address restrictions placed by Rome and by local Christian populations on Jews within North African society (Linder 1985; 1987, no. 63). Laws were promulgated in Constantinople against African Jews to respond to North African officials' requests to address practical problems Jews allegedly posed to African Christian contemporaries (Castritius 1985, 31). Edicts of the Councils of Carthage (*e.g.*, Councils of Carthage 419, Canon 129), demonstrate similar anxieties. As I have shown elsewhere, however, the "historicity" of these legal accounts is highly suspect as these laws exhibit conventional traits of the Christian polemical genre.[108] These texts are rarely descriptive of Jewish devotional practice, but rather associate dangerous Jewish behaviors with those of rival Christian groups, such as Donatists, Arians, and others comparably cast as heretics.[109]

Most frequently, other types of Christian literary texts from Africa that mention Jews are polemical in tone and obscure. For example, when texts of Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine refer to Jews, their references are mostly deprecating, involving interpretation of biblical descriptions of Jews and making accusations about Jewish belief and theology (Bobertz 1991; Fredriksen 1995).[110] Scholars often call this

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[107] Eight figurative panels of the synagogue's floor remain in the archive of the Brooklyn Museum in New York, while the three inscribed panels are affixed to the walls of the basement archive of the Bardo Museum in Tunis. Photographs of the former in Bleiberg (2006). Few of the other artifacts discovered in the excavations are documented and none of their present locations are known, as discussed in chapter five.

[108] See my forthcoming article for additional discussion (Stern 2007). Comparable skepticism is advocated toward Roman legal texts in Bradbury (1994, 102–139).

[109] The invariable clustering of description of Jews with discussions of non-"orthodox" Christian groups says less about Jewish practices and the legal remedies they required, and more about intra-Christian strife, polemics, and attempts to slander and distance non-Catholics and others with the Jewish slur. See below.

[110] Paula Fredriksen has carefully detailed as "hermeneutical" those forms of discourse whereby Christian authors use Jews to demonstrate points of textual interpretation or refer to Jews within Christian scriptures, rather than to Jews who exist in their own cultural spheres (1995; 2008). Additional discussion in chapter one.

genre of Jews "hermeneutical"—Jews whom Christians treat as literary devices, rather than as historical subjects (Fredriksen and Irshai 2006). Even if taken as actual subjects, however, the Jews described in these writings are, most frequently, elaborated discussions of those embedded in earlier biblical texts; these references therefore add little to our understanding of Jews and their devotional practices in Roman African society.

Only in isolated cases do writers describe African Jews in greater detail and outside of hermeneutical discourse. Augustine is the one author who specifically mentions individual African Jews (*Civ.* 22.8, *Ep.* 8*, *Ep.* 71), but in only one of his texts does he partly address devotional practices when he describes a Jewish magician (*Civ.* 22.8). This reference is obscure and probably draws from broader stereotypes about Jews as magicians found elsewhere in Greco-Roman and Christian literature, which function polemically within the authors' broader intra-Christian arguments.[111]

In all cases, neither the legal codes nor the literary texts that mention North African Jews provide sufficiently reliable information to investigate their devotional practices. The Christian legal and polemical "Jew" is most frequently a two-dimensional and adversarial character, who represents neither the activities of contemporaneous Jews, nor their devotional practices, nor their relationships to local African pagan or Christian populations.[112]

One last category of evidence from distinct regional and literary contexts might promise to illuminate Jewish devotional practices in North Africa. Rare rabbinic texts from the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmudim mention rabbis who had traveled to or were associated with Africa. None of these texts, regrettably, furnish any details about features of North African Jewish culture or devotional practices that might relate to the lives or particular outlooks of the rabbis mentioned:

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[111] His additional references describe a Jewish landowner and slaveholder (*Ep.* 8*), and a population of Jews in Oea whose collective understanding of the Hebrew language proves to be more accurate than Jerome's (*Ep.* 71). The first of these instances will be addressed in subsequent chapters; the single letter serves more as an accusation against a misbehaving Christian bishop than as a source for understanding the place of Jews in fifth-century African society. Augustine's second reference to Jews also appears to relate more to Augustine's personal disputes with Jerome, than to be an accurate documentation of language use among Jews in Oea, Libya.

[112] This point has been extensively treated in literature on the subject, on which see Barnes (1985) and Fredriksen (1995).

rabbinical texts that identify "Carthaginian" rabbis contain no regionally diagnostic material.[113] Some scholars have suggested that these texts might still provide useful if limited means to investigate Jewish culture in North Africa.[114] Rabbinic references to North African Jews are obscure, however, and, as with all texts of the genre, should be approached cautiously for historical interpretation.[115] Texts' mention of rabbis from Carthage *might* suggest an exogenous Jewish awareness of Jewish populations in Africa, but they cannot definitively suggest, in the absence of any substantiating archaeological evidence, the presence of any particularly "rabbinic" Jewish culture in North Africa.[116]

Certain rabbinic texts in question (i.e., *y. Yoma 1.3*; *b. Roš Haššanah* 26a), probably date to the late sixth through eighth centuries of Palestine and Babylonia—times and places removed from Jewish North African experience. These discussions of African rabbis and Jews in Babylonian and Palestinian texts *might* indicate a distant Jewish aware-

[113] Examples of these include: *y. Yoma* 1.3; *y. Kil'ayim* 1.9; *y. Demai*, 6.2; *y. Berakot* 4.2; *b. Berakot* 33a, cf. *b. Berakot* 29a, *y. Berakot* 4.3; *b. Roš Haššana*, 26a, *b. Ketubbot* 27b = *b. Baba Qama* 114b; *y. Šabbat* 26.2 = *y. Beṣah* 1.6. See the discussion of individual rabbis and *b. Men.* 110a. See Rives (1995, 219–220). These texts mention rabbis who travel in Africa, or those of African or Carthaginian origin, but do not provide discussions that substantively characterize rabbis' "African" qualities, traits, or descriptions of events that transpired there. In certain respects, rabbinic texts engage a particular polemical tradition, which is not entirely unrelated to that in orthodox Christian texts. Rabbinic texts and culture are most frequently self-interested; while other interpretations of Judaism existed in late antiquity, rabbinic texts and culture of the rabbis remain stubbornly self-referential (Schwartz 1998). Rabbinic texts reflect less interest in reproducing social reality than replicating and elaborating on a particularly rabbinic universe (Boyarin 1999; 2005). For related reasons, their contribution to the study of African Jewish populations is necessarily minimal.

[114] The supremacy of rabbinic culture in the Mediterranean was not a foregone conclusion through the sixth century. Rabbinic literatures and their literary goals require commemorate evaluation. For more extensive discussion of the issue, see Schwartz (1998, 68; 2001). These arguments relate to assumptions about intrinsic similarities between pan-Mediterranean Jewish populations and the acknowledged authority of the rabbis among them. Such considerations have been questioned in the previous chapter.

[115] For this, among other reasons, Rives' argument that "this evidence apparently indicates that the development of rabbinic Judaism in Carthage lagged only slightly behind that in Palestine itself," is particularly problematic (see Rives 1995, 219). Rabbinic texts, of course, require critical review for historical purposes. For additional discussion of the problems related to the historicity of these texts, see Cohen (1981; 1998) and Schwartz (2001).

[116] While one epitaph from Volubilis marks the grave of a daughter of a "Rabbi Yehuda," there is no indication that this "rabbi" need be of a "Talmudic" sort. For thorough discussion of differences between "epigraphical" and "Talmudic" rabbis, see Cohen (1981).

ness of the presence of Jews in Africa.[117] Talmudic texts themselves, however, add little toward understanding the realities of North African Jewish practices, devotional or otherwise. Previous conclusions drawn on the basis of these texts, about necessary connections between Jewish communities in Palestine, Babylonia, and North Africa, are misleading for these reasons: Jewish archaeological evidence from North Africa requires evaluation outside of all polemical and literary gazes.

North African Jews' ancestries might appear to be obscure, but their presence in North African culture does not. As I discuss in the following chapters, their linguistic, decorative, and architectural remains reflect conventions of the regions that stretched between central Libya and the Atlantic Ocean. North African Jews existed within the cultural and economic interstices of peoples of Africa, the western Mediterranean, and the Levant. They probably communicated with speakers of Punic, Libyan, Greek, and Latin, and negotiated business with worshippers of interwoven local, western, and eastern Mediterranean cults (Lassère 1996). The region's tectonic cultural climate induced complex expressions of identity within each of its various populations. While scholars have largely treated Jews as exceptions to North African cultural processes, this book demonstrates how Jews were embedded in them to the same degree as their neighbors. The term "North African" possessed different meanings in distinct places and times, and so too did the term "Jewish" mean something different among distinct populations and in different places and times. These terms are neither fixed nor exclusive, but tools toward improved understandings of cultural identities in Roman North Africa.

[117] For such reasons, Rives concludes that "the evidence for Carthaginian rabbis confirms the connections between Palestine and Carthage" (1995, 220). Talmudic mention of four rabbis additionally suggests to Rives that "we may thus tentatively conclude that there were at least two rabbis of Carthaginian origin active in Palestine, no earlier than the middle of the third century C.E." (1995, 220). Texts, however, can support neither assertion. Rives rightly concludes that "this is rather different from supposing that the rabbinic tradition was flourishing in Carthage itself" (1995, 220).

CHAPTER THREE

NAMING LIKE THE NEIGHBORS: JEWISH ONOMASTIC PRACTICES IN ROMAN NORTH AFRICA

Figure 1. Funerary stele of *Μαρεῖνος Πτολεμαῖος Ἰουδῆος*, Sala; Antiquities Museum of Rabat, Morocco. Photo: Author

In one of St. Augustine's most recently discovered writings (*Ep.* 8*), Augustine chastises a Christian for defrauding a Jew in the Hippo region of Numidia. The Christian, Victor, had nefariously acquired deeds to the estate of a Jewish landholder and slaveowner by the name of Licinius; Victor had purchased the lands' titles from Licinius's mother, who had sold them in revenge for a dispute she was having with Licinius's wife or slave.[1] Licinius had traveled to meet with Augustine to address

[1] Scholars dispute whether this Victor was, in fact, a bishop. Goulven Madec denies this possibility, though Jean Rougé supports it, due to Augustine's form of address

the problem; as a Jew he no longer possessed the legal right to bring direct suit against Victor in court (*Ep.* 8*.2–16; *cf. Cod. theod.* 76.2.41).[2] Augustine expresses concern with Victor's actions and directs him both to return the ill-gotten lands and to mediate between Licinius and his estranged mother, but no record indicates the case's outcome. [3]

This epistle is unusual among Christian writings in that it provides an attestation of the personal name of an actual Jew. In the letter, Augustine marks Licinius' background by preceding the initial mention of his name with the adjective *Iudaeus* ("Iudeus Licinius"; *Ep.* 8*.2); the legal context of Augustine's epistle requires this identification of Licinius as a *Iudaeus* to determine Augustine's treatment of the case itself.[4] Licinius's gentilic name, however, furnishes no indication of Jewish context—it is an extraordinarily common Numidian personal name in the fourth through sixth centuries (*e.g.*, *ILA* I.1741; *CIL* 8.27932).[5] Inability to discern "Jewishness" from Licinius's personal name, furthermore, appears to be strategic—his gentilic name indexes conventional North African onomastic practices rather than particularly Jewish ones. Regardless

for Victor. See commentary in Augustine's collected letters in Eno (1989, 65) and commentary within Madec (1981, 56–66), Rougé (1978,177–183), and Frend (1986, 497–511).

[2] Though Theodosian I had "renewed the licensing" of the Jewish religion in 393 C.E., a council of Carthage in 419, specifically canons 128 and 129, "decreed a series of prohibitions on minority accusation…and furthermore subsumed the Jews with other groups, as *infames*" (Castritius 1985, 45–51). Also see discussion in Linder (1985, 57). Licinius was forced to seek advice from Augustine, who would have been expected to address this problem internally within the church.

[3] Various scholars have commented on the awkward way that Augustine handles this case, as the person who perpetrated the malfeasance, Victor, was also the individual Augustine directed to handle the case. Castritius argues that "Licinius was able to back up his claims according to '*optimum ius*' by such solid and irrefutable evidence as a law of December-112 (*Cod. theod.* 76.2.41) required of litigants against clericals" (1985, 31).

[4] The legal remedy for Victor's action relates directly to Licinius's legal status as a *Iudaeus*. Laws that specifically curtailed Jewish landowning in Africa were passed much later (1 August 535), and appear to be more clearly directed to prohibit land ownership by Arian groups (Schöll and Kroll 1895, 244–245, no. 37). Also see discussion in Linder (1987, 381–389, nos. 62, 63).

[5] The name is especially popular in the regions of Caldis, Tiddis, Cirta, and Thibilis (Lassère 1977, 182; *e.g.*, *CIL* 8.27932*)*. For example, *ILAlg* I.1741 reads: *DMS M Licinius Rutilius/Luicini Paterni/Fil.P.V.A/LI.H.S.E.* In the fourth and fifth centuries, a common North African tendency developed to mark funerary stele with only the personal names of the deceased. If this were the case, what would Licinius's grave marker have looked like? Would it have borne symbols or markers that Licinius was a Jew? Or would it have simply read "Licinius" just like other funerary markers from his period and region in Jewish and non-Jewish contexts? Such questions highlight the complexity of the onomastic problem.

of the reason for his parents' selection of his name, the effect of their choice is clear: Licinius's name embodies what is properly North African.[6] If Licinius's name had been recorded only on an epitaph, there might be no indication at all that Licinius was a Jew.

Previous studies have emphasized the distinctiveness of North African Jewish naming practices, but note the surprising degree to which some Jewish African names, which resemble North African ones, demonstrate instances of Jews' cultural *assimilation* in Roman Africa (Le Bohec 1981, 226–228; Lassère 1977, 416–417). Yet a different picture emerges when the same Jewish names are examined from the perspective of their varied North African onomastic contexts. Most North African Jewish names were not very different from those of their neighbors at all. Rather, Roman African Jewish populations consistently drew from conventional Roman African naming patterns to label their children. Names such as "Licinius" represent broader trends in demonstrably Jewish evidence.

In this chapter, I argue that North African Jewish onomastic practices primarily followed the shifting onomastic patterns of their North African contexts. Though Jews may have occasionally conferred locally unusual names to index difference from those within surrounding populations, they still used the onomastic frameworks of their local environments to do so. North African onomastic formulae were somewhat standardized and densely encoded with information: a name's structure could frequently provide insight into the named individual's social, economic, professional, and cultural contexts (Lassère 1977, 386). Thus, names served as mutable frameworks whereby North Africans could simultaneously index multiple cultural spheres. In most cases, Jews used these North African systems to emulate regionally conventional names. In other cases, they employed onomastic frameworks that differed entirely from North African ones. In still other cases, they used names as a medium to demonstrate simultaneous affiliations with both broader North African cultures and pan-Mediterranean Jewish ones. In most identifiable instances, however, North African Jewish names reflect Jewish populations' embeddedness in the local cultures that surrounded

[6] Motivations for Licinius's name choice necessarily remain speculative. Perhaps, Licinius's Jewish status was apparent to others in his society and any idiosyncratic Jewish marker in his name would have been extraneous, or perhaps the person who named him, such as his ultimately estranged mother, used his name as a vehicle to emulate broader North African culture, rather than to designate difference from it.

them. Contextual analysis of regional and diachronic trends in naming, therefore, provides one means to begin to decipher Jews' complex cultural identities in varied North African environments.

I. Methodology

This approach to names results from distinct models of cultural dynamics and understandings of the practices that signify them. From the outset, any attempt to assess how Jews named their young is predicated upon preliminary awareness of Jews' broader onomastic environments. Only by first evaluating how local North African populations named their children and themselves, as well as how several African minority populations named their children and themselves, can one develop local standards whereby to evaluate Jewish naming practices. Onomastic paradigms shifted according to region and time in North Africa and evaluation of Jewish names requires sensitivity to this variation.

My central assumption is that name allocation results from undetectable but complex negotiations between name choice and name constraint. One aspect of name formation may relate to a deliberate choice of a parent or commemorator who assigned the name—such decisions can index active preferences for certain cultural affiliations or ideas over another.[7] A concurrent facet of onomastic practice, however, is the equally important role of custom, or the perception of lack of choice, that also informs name allocation. In some cases, people might name their progeny in certain ways because of cultural *habitus*—the sense that it is *how things are done* under specific circumstances (Bourdieu 1998, 5–6). Stringent Roman republican onomastic frameworks, after all, left little room to exercise "choice" when naming children. Additional factors also might have restricted individuals' freedom to choose a name—slaves probably had no control over the names they or their progeny acquired. This is reflected in certain conventions of naming that relate to status: in the Roman Empire, certain slave dealers and

[7] Such active choices of individuals may be reflected in the acquisition of hypocoristica at religious conversion or for some other occasion (*cf.* Horsley 1992; Le Bohec 1981a, 175). Also see recent discussion in Williams (2007).

owners accorded Greek names to their slaves regardless of their origin (Lassère 1977, 435).[8]

Most extant evidence for African Jewish names probably derives from those of intermediate status and agency, from the earlier and later Empire, who were just wealthy enough to fund basic inscriptions to commemorate the deceased. In these cases, the degree to which individuals' name allocations respond to the choices versus the social limitations of the namer, remains difficult to decipher. Certain aspects of a name's formula or construction, however, may provide clues to determine the status, or degree of agency, of the deceased's family. During earlier periods of the Roman Empire in Africa, for example, a Jew with *tria nomina* probably possessed more freedom to choose his progeny's personal name than did a single-named slave for his progeny.

A. *Occasionality of Naming and its Commemoration*

Attention to the occasionality of names' commemoration in inscriptions remains integral to the analysis of a name's features. The presence of a name on a devotional text or an epitaph, for example, results from the convergence of onomastic practices with devotional or commemorative ones. Temporal and ideological spaces exist between the original naming of an infant and the ultimate inscription of her name in a devotional text, or on her funerary stele. In many cases, a person's death may have been the only occasion for which a person's name would have ever been written, let alone set in stone.[9] Acknowledgement of the possible dissonance between a name and its commemorated form anticipates that some naming practices might respond specifically to the context of the name's commemoration and its anticipated audience, and need

[8] During the Republic and early Principate, the exact allocation of names, too, was affected by the possibility that one parent might be a slave while the other was not. Such onomastically complex situations were even trickier when the mother possessed higher status than the father (Dixon 1992, 126–127).

[9] Of course, as previously discussed, the medium of epigraphy maintains particular conventions of the genre. We have very little understanding of whether names might be recorded differently in literary sources than in epigraphic ones. That is, the relationship is unclear between *how* a name is recorded, the medium in which it is recorded, and the *purpose* of its being recorded. No standard exists that demonstrates how the same name of the same person might be rendered similarly or differently according to its precise context. See discussion in Bodel (2001, 5).

not necessarily represent what a person was actually called during his or her lifetime.

A series of unknowns, therefore, necessarily impinges upon the scope of onomastic analysis. First, the lack of social historical information about individual North African Jews, their origins, and their status complicates this examination and counsels more cautious suggestions about the reasons for certain name choices. A Greek name such as that of Μαρεῖνος Πτολεμαῖος could variously indicate Μαρεῖνος's foreign birth or demonstrate an African parent's wish to use his child's name to index alterity from his North African onomastic milieu (Figure 1). In certain cases, the script in which a name is recorded may provide some additional clues about cultural origins of the stone's dedicant.[10] The impossibility of identifying the geographic origins of the person who has conferred a name, however, ultimately impedes definitive conclusions about original motivations for that name's choice.

Second, though names may provide an indication of the cultural context and proclivities of the namer, naming practices are also subject to the dictates of fashion. Thus, name choice is not necessarily the product of a deliberate ideological agenda and cannot elucidate the "beliefs" of parents, let alone of the deceased themselves (Kajanto 1967, 6–10).[11] Names may suggest a cultural context in which a person is named, but cannot fully explain the relationships between the name's choice, religious belief, and practice.[12] But while the *reasons* for name choices may be elusive, the patterns in name constructions are not. The

[10] Issues of discrepancy between language and script will be more thoroughly addressed in chapter four.

[11] Personal names certainly may be chosen on the basis of how they sound, their connotation, therefore and what type of feelings they might evoke. The exact motivations for the choice of specific names, therefore, ultimately remains elusive.

[12] This chapter will not attempt to derive from etymologies of names understandings of the "beliefs" or worldviews of the named (Salomies 2001, 73–75). Such objectives are impossible to meet because they demand irresponsible extrapolations from the names themselves. An interpretation of the cultural nuances of certain names is plausible, while the absolute interpretation of the beliefs and "intentions" of the namer is not. The presence of a theophoric element in a name, after all, necessarily reflects the devotional practices and beliefs of the person or the parents of the person who bears it. The Christian inscription *In Pace Lassbal* exemplifies this (Leynaud 1922, no. 21); despite the presence of the Punic theophoric element "Bal" in this person's name, his inscription and find context may be Christian.

discernable aspects of onomastic practice offer more definitive data for broader cultural discussion.[13]

Questions that govern this analysis therefore include: How do Jewish choices and trends in naming respond to contemporaneous patterns in North African onomastics? How do different naming patterns in Jewish inscriptions manifest themselves and how do they compare to distinct naming patterns among other North African minority populations? Do tendencies in Jewish naming appear to correlate with shifts in place or cultural paradigm? Other features, such as the gender of the deceased and the language and script used to commemorate a name, additionally inform these considerations. Attention to these questions and to the contingences of name allocation shape this contextual examination of onomastic practices of North African Jewish populations.

B. *Data Selection and Limitations of Analysis*

This approach to names relies upon distinct methods of data selection and chronology. While Yann Le Bohec and Jean-Marie Lassère have both collected Jewish onomastic evidence from North Africa in the second through sixth centuries, their studies have incorporated names attested in literary as well as epigraphic sources. While most of the names I consider here are listed within the prosopographies of Lassère (1977) and Le Bohec (1981), the Jewish names I discuss derive mostly from epigraphic contexts.[14] For reasons previously outlined, I do not consider in similar ways names provided in rabbinic texts that were redacted in later periods in Babylonia and Roman Palestine. Only

[13] Other limitations relate specifically to the exploration of Jewish names. Accidents of preservation and scholars' unarticulated criteria of selection impede systematic approaches to established prosopographies of Jewish names. Traditional expectations about what names, contexts, and symbols are or are not "Jewish" continue to frame the lists of names compiled here. Scholars assume, for example, that "Moses" is a Jewish name because of its presence in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Derda 1997). Similarly, a name such as *Iudas* might be presumed to be prototypically Jewish, while another name might be considered to be Jewish because it is accompanied by a menorah, *e.g.*, *Iulius Nictentius* (Le Bohec no. 67). An examination of data selected in this way may reinforce previously held beliefs about Jewish naming patterns rather than challenge them. An attempt to better situate these materials cannot alter this traditional bias, but it can question assumptions perpetuated about the materials and alter interpretations of them.

[14] I do, however, exclude some of Le Bohec's inscriptions for the reasons described in the introduction. These include nos. 2, 9, 10, and 11, among others.

names that appear in their original North African transcriptions are considered in this chapter.[15]

My chronology for the onomastic data also impacts the shape of this analysis. I assign dates to inscribed names according to their find contexts, operative onomastic paradigms and accompanying iconography. I do not, on the other hand, consider texts' paleography as diagnostic of particular periods.[16] This chapter's division into early (second and third centuries C.E.) and later (fourth through sixth centuries C.E.) periods of regional onomastic practice, rather, responds to broader trends in North African naming, which reflect the expansion of citizenship in the Empire in 212 C.E. and Africa's rapid adoption of Christianity by the fourth century.

Table 1 demonstrates my assignment of dates to the inscriptions that appear within Le Bohec's collection of onomastic data. The inscriptions I list retain identification numbers from Le Bohec's collection, but, in most cases, I assign later dates to the majority of the Jewish inscriptions than does Le Bohec. Those attributable to earlier periods (approximately 16) are fewer than those of later date (approximately 24), while other "intermediate" names (approximately 18) exhibit features of both onomastic periods. The dates I assign for these inscriptions necessarily serve as approximations, but they suggest reasonable means for the diachronic evaluation of Jewish naming in Africa.

This chapter's organization facilitates the evaluation of Jewish names according to the temporal and regional shifts in North African onomastic practices. The first portion of the chapter evaluates regionally conventional and Jewish names in the western provinces of Africa Pro-

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[15] The Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds use Semitic languages and scripts to record names of rabbis from Carthage, such as Aba, Aha, Hana, and Isaac. For discussion of these names, see chapter two, n. 113. Le Bohec (1981, 211), and Rives (1995, 216). Whatever such rabbis' names might have been in original contexts, the Talmudic texts necessarily transcribe and transform them into a secondary Hebrew script and orthography—this process may have altered the North African form of the name. The rabbinic genre of literature, furthermore, provides an echoing onomastic record; it mentions possible names of Carthaginian rabbis, but redacts them in times and places distant from their possible original manifestations and contexts. Both Le Bohec (1981b) and Lassère (1977, 347) include names from rabbinic texts in their prosopographies.

[16] Paleography has proved to be an unreliable method for dating inscriptions. Judgments of date on paleographic grounds usually depend on understandings of progress (poorer to richer, less civilized to more civilized, etc.) that rarely have dependable grounding in the evaluation of inscriptions. For further discussion see Bodel (2001, 2–3).

Table I. Distribution of inscriptions with onomastic elements according to date

Names during early period of late Republic/early Principate (late second through late third centuries, C.E.) Le Bohec nos. 1, 40, 41, 45, 64, 67, 69, 70, 71, 73, 74, 76, 77 (?), 78, 79, 81 (?) Total number of names associated with period: 16 (+/- 2)
Names during late period of later Empire/late antiquity (early fourth through sixth centuries, C.E.), Le Bohec nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 14, 16, 20, 37, 38, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 66, 75 Total number of names associated with period: 24 (+/-2)
Names of intermediate designation (late third through late fourth centuries, C.E.) Le Bohec nos. 12, 17, 18, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35, 36, 39, 42, 43, 44, 80 Total number of names associated with period: 18

Numbers provided are the reference numbers for the inscriptions within Le Bohec (1981).

consularis, Numidia, Byzacena, and the Mauretanias from the second through the late third centuries. The second portion of the chapter evaluates the changed onomastic environment of the later Principate and early Christian periods in the same regions and examines later period Jewish inscriptions in this context. The third portion separately treats Jewish naming patterns in Tripolitania, where onomastic practices remained relatively distinct from those within the western provinces.[17] Evaluation of how Jewish onomastic practices compare to both regionally conventional and unconventional ones permits attention to Jews' uses of names as indices of cultural identity.

Several common features of onomastic analyses will not be adopted here. This chapter will not furnish a new prosopography of Jewish names from North Africa;[18] Lassère, Kajanto, Le Bohec, and others have already compiled extensive lists and statistics of these names, to

[17] These geographic and cultural distinctions are introduced more extensively in chapter two.

[18] Salomies' distinctions between prosopographics and onomastic study are operative here. See Salomies (2000, 77–78).

which I occasionally make minor adjustments.[19] Additionally, the chapter will neither perform an exhaustive examination of all prototypes of naming practices from North Africa in all periods, nor use names to make sweeping social historical claims about Jewish immigration waves, family relationships, and individuals' origins (*cf.* Le Bohec 1981b, 220). While I will endeavor to raise possibilities about the social historical implications of some patterns of naming, I will not build imagined social histories on their bases.[20] This chapter, rather, serves to map North African Jewish naming practices according to their local and temporal contexts.[21] The cultural implications of Jewish name choices directly relate to these local North African onomastic paradigms.[22]

[19] Tal Ilan is presently working on an onomasticon of the Jewish diaspora that includes some of these names, while Williams's recent work addresses a similar topic (2007). I wish to redraw name lists of Lassère and Le Bohec at a later date. For a broader discussion of diverse approaches to naming, see Salomies (2001, 76–78).

[20] Though names from the earlier Roman period often clearly conveyed manumission information, later name forms could rarely do this. Most of the Jewish inscriptions preserved are from later periods, and the onomastic ambiguity of their context readers it correspondingly futile to interpret them for social historical purposes.

[21] After all, North African Jews chose to label their children (or even, at times, themselves) in their immediate social and cultural contexts, not necessarily in correspondence with the contexts of Jewish groups living 400 km away. This approach reflects the realities of life and travel in the ancient Mediterranean. Certainly, specific groups of people, such as merchants, were particularly mobile in the ancient world. The epigraphic record also attests to various other groups, who immigrated to North Africa from other places in the Empire. For the most part, however, most people did not frequently and repeatedly relocate in antiquity. It makes sense, therefore, to examine their responses to their immediate environments as well as possibly foreign ones.

[22] This trend necessarily relates to the circularity of examining lithic inscriptions from the Roman period. Such inscriptions exist because of their emulation of what was Roman, and their onomastic record reflects this bias: it preserves the names of those who already valorized what was Roman (Meyer 1990). Epigraphic and onomastic trends throughout North African territories, however, indicate a quick adoption of these imported and linked Roman practices the provinces.

II. Onomastic Patterns in the Late Republic and Early Principate: Western Provinces

In North Africa, as elsewhere in the Mediterranean, naming conventions shifted according to demographic distribution, political circumstance, and internal and external migrations.[23] Diverse naming paradigms coexisted in the western provinces throughout the second and third centuries C.E., but by the period in which the earliest Jewish names are attested, the Roman onomastic system in North Africa had developed certain distinguishing characteristics. Both indigenous and exogenous populations in North Africa had quickly adapted Roman republican and early imperial onomastic models to name their children.[24]

A. *Name Structure*

The onomastic formulae of the traditional Latin naming system had provided a means whereby populations across Africa could identify with the colonizing Roman culture (Cherry 1997). In regions of Africa where Roman qualities was valorized, Roman-like names could advertise a person's access to (or emulation of) Roman culture (Salomies 2001, 84). In the later Republic and early Principate, Roman citizenship and the earning of a citizen's name were perceived to be desirable objectives for many Africans, and a Latin construction of a person's name could announce an individual's place in North Africa's cultural hierarchy (Salomies 2001, 89). The possession of the three names of the male *tria nomina*, which included the *praenomen, nomen*, and *cognomen* (the stock Latin personal name, the gentilic name, and the family name, respectively), and the female *duo nomina* (*nomen* and *cognomen*—even freeborn

[23] Changes in naming paradigms did not occur simultaneously among all groups, but represent consistent trends of naming in North Africa. My division of texts into earlier and later periods depends on the frameworks discussed earlier in the chapter as well as on factors of inscriptions' discovery. The dates I allocate are due to my assignment and I will make clear where these differ from previous periodization.

[24] Although some scholars have recently challenged traditional explanations for the onomastic shifts in the Empire (Salway 1994, 124), scholarly consensus supports traditional correlations between name structure and restrictions on citizenship (Salomies 2001; Meyer 1990). One of the most surprising aspects of North African onomastic practices is the degree to which Roman naming practices were so quickly embraced by the broader North African population.

women could not possess a *praenomen*), marked the names of upper-class and freeborn men and women (Kajanto 1963, 3). The use of the *tria nomina* was a privilege only a citizen could possess, though freedmen could use the *praenomen* of their master in place of a filial *cognomen* once they had attained freedom (Kajanto 1963, 4). Once a master freed a slave, that freedman's name would assume the trinominal structure, but would thus be permanently marked by the slave's indebtedness to his former master and patron (Bodel 2001, 31).

During the second and third centuries in Africa, however, people of lower status increasingly adopted names with trinominal and duonominal structures, albeit in imperfect forms.[25] For example, imperfect *tria nomina* might include a *praenomen* followed by two *cognomina* or two *nomina*, instead of one of each, *e.g., Aponius Lusius Marianus* (Robert 1962, 372).[26] Though the precise objectives for adopting these particular onomastic arrangements remain unclear, their use signals a desire to evoke the form or prestige of the Roman *tria nomina*, with or without an understanding of, or a previous ability to use, the formula more properly.[27] In fact, this "improper" use of Roman form itself becomes the most common form of naming among North Africans by the third century C.E., when even women might be attributed names with patterns of *tria nomina*. Slaves, on the other hand, were still deprived of legitimizing *cognomina*. They usually bore single personal names, frequently followed by the genitive form of their master's name.[28]

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[25] Additional examples abound. These include Felix Bebenianus Caesennianus (*ILT* 728; *IOILA* 3, no. 99) and the praenominal duonomen of P. Extricatus (IOILA 3, no. 99).

[26] Names from the third century necropolis frequently exhibit such patterns, *e.g.*, Leynaud (1922, no. 21).

[27] Other groups in North Africa also use the trinominal form after it loses its meaning within the Principate for similar reasons. Perhaps this was the only condition under which members of particular groups would have had ever had the opportunity to use the name form. It seems that this naming system, therefore, continued to retain an ability to evoke a type of once-exclusive Roman status, even after its stringency had diminished.

[28] Sometimes women's names also followed this formula, when a woman's unique name might precede the genitive form of her husband's name (Kraemer 2004, 163). At times, slaves might have two unique names, which would be followed by the explicit labels of *servus* or *verna, e.g., Sagria Prima, verna italica* (Lassère 1977, 391; Kajanto 1963, 4; *cf. CIL* 8.24 846). Additional types of information about a person's status within the Empire might accompany the name. The announcement of one's *tribus* after one's name "fortified the claim to Roman citizenship" (Kajanto 1963, 4); those with the luck to attain the privilege of citizenship frequently asserted explicitly their *civis* status in an epitaph. The pride in the announcement of *civis* indicates the exceptional

B. *Name choices*

Available name choices and forms expanded in North Africa during the course of the Empire. Onomastic frameworks during the earliest periods were accompanied by only a limited repertoire of Latin personal names.[29] The earliest examples of Roman names in Africa reflect such restrictions on personal name choice.[30] The grant of universal citizenship in the empire, however, had rapidly facilitated more widespread access to the use of *tria nomina*; citizens of Rome's provinces particularly embraced their new freedom to emulate this formerly restricted onomastic framework. In conjunction with this loosening of the stringency of names' formulae, the list of acceptable personal names had also expanded. By the time of North Africans' wide-scale adoption of Roman names in the second and third centuries C.E., Roman-like personal names had grown locally popular as North African male and female names increasingly emulated those of former Roman emperors and political figures, *e.g.*, *Iulius/a, Traianus, Pompeius/a, Maximianus/a, Diocletianus* (*IFCC* 2.562, 413, nos. 18, 39, 35; Audollent 1890, no. 140). Roman *sounding* names, such as *Marciana* (*IFCC* 3.93), *Caelius/a, Datus/a, Faustus/inus/ina, Felix, Fortunata, Victor*, and *Victoria* also gained popularity (*ILT* 482 ff.; *ILT* 420).[31]

Ability to choose one's name, however, still related directly to one's status. Although lower class individuals might have enjoyed augmented status and freedom to choose their name form and choice, slaves remained largely incapable of enjoying such luxuries. Until the later

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nature of such a title, as displayed in one text from Hadrumetum, ancient Sousse: *DMS |Q MARCIVS|SVRIACVS |CIVIS TENI| TANVS| VIX AN XLV* (Barrier and Benson 1908, no. 6).

[29] Only 17 *praenomina* existed in the earlier Republic, but the *praenomen* had already begun to decline by the time North Africans had adopted Roman naming customs.

[30] Roman soldiers and their families produced most of the earliest evidence for Roman naming conventions within African territories (*cf.* Audollent 1890, 105): their uses of Roman personal names within North Africa accord with stricter Roman frameworks. The IIIrd Augustan Legion, stationed throughout North Africa, produced many of these earlier examples of Roman onomastic practice; many of its soldiers were actually from Syrian Palmyra, but their African tombs reflected their announcement of the Roman status and status within the army (Février 1997, 2.145).

[31] Inscriptions with names that emulate those of emperors and political leaders abound (*e.g.*, Gauckler no. 129: DMS/AQUILIA MAXIMI/NA VIXIT/ANIS P.M. LXXXIII). Gauckler notes that in the Proconsularis region, "Les surnoms sont presque tous d'une grande banalité: Donatus, Faustus, Faustinus, Felix, Fortunata, Ianuarius, Respectus, Victor, Vitalis, Victoria" (1928, 482). Also see Jones, Martindale, and Morris (1971).

portion of this period, many of those with single names were still probably slaves. Slaves' names were usually chosen by their masters, and their name assignments frequently related to the names of households to which they belonged (Salomies 2001, 91).

C. *Jewish Names*

In the early Empire, Jewish inscriptions from the western North African provinces largely exhibited names that coincided with local onomastic practice. Most Jews conferred names whose forms reflected local convention for their status. At other times, Jewish inscriptions, particularly of those who appear to have most recently arrived in North Africa, exhibited name frameworks and choices that indexed complete or partial alterity to their local environments.

1. *Onomastic Similarity*

Roman North African proclivities for name structure and name choice predict the formulae and choices of the majority of names within African Jewish inscriptions of the late Republic and early Principate. Among the total number of Jewish texts from the earlier period (16+/-5), the vast majority emulates classical *tria* or *duo* nominal patterns: over 70 percent of Jewish names from the earlier period can be so classified [12 out of 16(+/-2)].[32] Examples of such trinominal names include *L. Annius Constans* and *P. Laetorius Trio* (Le Bohec 1981b, 217). Approximately 13 Jewish names, furthermore, adhere to the general classifications of the *duo nomina*, which includes the *nomen* and *cognomen*.[33] Jewish names from the regions of Proconsularis, Byzacena, and the Mauretanias frequently

[32] Le Bohec dates most of these inscriptions to the second to third centuries. At least three of those within the group Le Bohec identifies as possessing "proper" *tria nomina* (*P. Aurelius Felicianus*, *Aurelius Fortunatus*, and *Q. Aurelius Saturninus*; nos. 9, 10, 11), should be excluded from this number. For discussion of the disqualification of these inscriptions of Jewish, see p. 17 of chapter one.

[33] Here I include names to which the word *Iudaeus* is affixed at the end of the onomastic structure, as I do not believe that the *Iudaeus* element of them is necessarily part of the actual name itself. Le Bohec largely classifies names that bear both *nomen* and *cognomen* as well as *Iudaea/us* as trinominal; it remains unclear whether this last word functions as a name, adjective, or toponymic. A related discussion is developed later in this chapter.

adhere to these normative African *duo nomina*, *e.g., Aponius Rufus* (Le Bohec no. 20) and *Claudia Honorata* (Le Bohec no. 35).[34]

The majority of these Jewish names probably originated in periods following the *praenomen*'s decline and its use in a trinominal structure.[35] Most Jewish names that appear to employ the trinominal and duonominal patterns, therefore, do so after their use had already lost stringency and status. Such Jewish names inexactly emulate *tria nomina*: one man and even three women possess names with these patterns that bear two *cognomina* (rather than a *praenomen, nomen*, and *cognomen*) within their three names, *e.g., Flavia Annia Maximosa* (Le Bohec no. 42).[36] Jews' "improper" manipulations of the trinominal form, however, entirely coincide with onomastic patterns of their North African contemporaries—the false *tria-* or *duo-nomina* remained the most popular method of name formulation in this period in the western provinces. More significant than the "accuracy" of the name form is the desire among Jewish populations to emulate it at all and in ways so similar to those of their neighbors (*cf.* Le Bohec 1981, 218–219).

Jews' uses of the tri- and duo-nominal forms were not simply stylistic—they also reflected the appropriate use of Roman onomastic systems to articulate family and status relationships. For example, one *Pompeia Cara* appears to have inherited her *nomen* from her father, *Pompeius Restutus* (Le Bohec no. 70).[37] The onomastic link between the two is characteristic of the period, as "a freeborn girl would bear the feminine form of her father's gentilic name, and sometimes, the cognomen" (Dixon 1992, 127). Whether *Pompeia*'s possession of her father's gentilic name reflected free status is unclear, but her name certainly *indexed* free status. Similarly, Jewish names from the period indicated the impact of lower

[34] During the Republic and earlier Empire, upper-class women and, after a time, upper-class men would use this name form: after the *praenomen* began to disappear, more male and female names across the Empire began to fall into this category in the second and third centuries (Le Bohec 1981b, 219).

[35] Though Le Bohec dates many of these texts to the second and third centuries, I suspect that some of these texts may be more appropriately assigned later dates.

[36] Jewish trinomina that follow incorrect formulae, such as *G. Selius Felix* (Le Bohec no. 40) and *P. Faustinus Rufus* (Le Bohec no. 41), clumsily emulate this form. Le Bohec notes that most of the trinominal texts of Jews and "Judaïsants" derive from Carthage around the area of Tunis (1981b, 216–219). Delattre dated most of the inscriptions from Gammarth to the second or third centuries, and subsequent scholars, including Le Bohec, appear to sustain these dates.

[37] This *nomen* is exceedingly popular in the region, *cf. ILAlg* 2.1, nos. 3940, 3944, 3945.

status on the form of a name. Jews who were conferred single names during this period were probably slaves, *e.g.*, Καικιλιανός (Le Bohec no. 79; see additional discussion below).

Jewish choices of personal names during the earlier period also reflected those popular throughout the region. As did their neighbors, Jews frequently derived their names from those of Roman emperors and political figures and the African landowners who manumitted their lineages (Lassère 1977, 187). Common names referred to the lineages of Pompey, as well as of the Julian and Flavian families, *e.g.*, *Pompeianus* (Le Bohec no. 80), *Iulia Sissoï* (Le Bohec no. 56), *Iulius Nictentius* (Le Bohec no. 67), and *Flavia Annia Maximosa* (Le Bohec no. 42).[38] Different Jewish gentilic names reflected other Roman *sounding* names popular in Africa, such as *Caelius/a* (*Caelia Thalassa*; Le Bohec no. 73), *Felix* (*G. Selius Felix*; Le Bohec no. 40), *Fortunatus/a* (Le Bohec no. 11; 34a; *cf. ILT* no. 457), and *Faustinus* (*P. Faustinus Rufus*; Le Bohec no. 41). All such choices were conventional among North Africans during this period.

Different Jewish single personal names may reflect constraints on name choice characteristic of those with lower status in North Africa. For example, one epitaph from Volubilis commemorates a certain Καικιλιανὸς, who was an official of the "synagogue of the Jews" (Le Bohec no. 79). This text, in a Greek script and language, commemorates a man, whose name is a popular *cognomen* (Καικιλιανός = Caecilianus) within the region of Volubilis during the second and third centuries C.E. (*cf. IAM* 125, 352, 434, 436, 565). In this region of Mauretania, the Caeciliani were a landholding family, whose names marked those of the people they had freed throughout this region (cf. *IAM* 352 a, b). Perhaps this Caecilianus, an official among Jews (προτοπολίτης), may have once been a slave; his servile relation to the Caecilianus clan might explain his receipt of a single personal name. The frequency of this name in the region and an earlier date for this inscription support such a hypothesis.

[38] For further discussion, see previous note and Le Bohec (nos. 79–81; 53–59; 42, 43, 64).

Figure 2. Funerary stele of Pompeius Restutus, Constantine, Algeria. Sketch: Delamare 1850, pl. 157, no. 6 = *CIL* 8.7155

2. *Onomastic Alterity*

Despite common correlations between Jewish and local onomastic practices, some Jewish name structures and personal names differed markedly from those conventional among North Africans in similar regions. Insertions of adjectives, toponymics, the use of locally uncommon name frameworks, and personal name choices all indexed difference from local naming practices.

(a) *Iudaeus* as a Marker of Difference

The most obvious of these cases would seem to be those in which the word *Iudaeus* or *Iudeus* is inserted into the name commemorated on an inscription. One epitaph discovered in Constantine, Algeria, in the mid-1800s furnishes an example of this pattern. It affixes the marker *Iudeus* to the name of the deceased.

The text reads, "POMPEIO | RESTUTO | IUDEO | POMPEIA CARA | PATRI RARIS|SIMO FECIT" (Delamare 1850, 157, no. 6 = Le Bohec no. 70).[39] The epitaph's onomastic elements are conventional for the Cirta region during the second and third centuries C.E.: the dedicant of the epitaph, *Pompeia*, appropriately bears the feminine form

[39] In his comprehensive compilation of Algerian antiquities, *Exploration Sciéntifique de l'Algérie*, Adolphe Delamare preserves an etching of this semispherical funerary stele from Constantine (Delamare 1850, 157, no. 6), from the region of Sirta, Numidia, but its exact find context is unknown. The spelling of *Iudeus* for *Iudaeus* is common in late Latin inscriptions.

of her father's common North African personal name, *Pompeius*. Though supplementation of *Iudeo* in this epitaph differentiates it from others in the region, the function of *Iudeo* in the name is unclear. Is it a third name of a *tria nomina* structure? Is it an "ethnic"? Is it a toponymic to designate the geographic origin of the deceased? Is it a cultural marker, or a means of differentiating *this* Pompeius Restutus from similarly named men in the region? Local precedent might initially support affirmative answers to each of these questions, but subtle features of the inscribed name defy easy explanation through local analogy.

At first glance, *Iudaeus* could apparently function as a *cognomen*, which would be inherited by Pompeius's legitimate progeny. This hypothesis cannot be fully supported, however, since the dedicant of the stone is female. A male sibling of Pompeia would have inherited his father's *cognomen*, but Pompeia, as a female, would not necessarily have inherited Pompeius's *cognomen* from her father like a brother might have.[40] Restutus's progeny's inheritance (or lack thereof) of this name might have indicated its use as a *cognomen*, but Pompeia's gender prevents any verification of such a possibility.

Could *Iudaeus*, then, function as an "ethnic"? This suggestion is feasible—in North Africa during these periods, the *tria* and *duonomina* served as vehicles to introduce comparable markers into a name structure. Specific names might emulate the trinominal or duonominal form, but replace an "ethnic" in the cognominal position. Votive texts from Lepcis Magna demonstrate African individuals' use of such onomastic patterns, *e.g., M(arcus) Iunius Punicus* (*IRT* 392; *cf.* 403, 434).[41] It is unclear, however, what such an "ethnic" designation might indicate. *Punicus* and *Iudaeus* might share onomastic functions: they occupy similar positions in their owners' names and might index distinct aspects of their owners' North African cultural identities. Yet it is unclear whether the terms *Punicus* and *Iudaeus* are equivalent indexicals: *Punicus* could likely indicate a set of cultic or linguistic practices (as the theophoric element of *Iunius* might suggest). *Iudaeus*, too, could index similar ranges

[40] Male progeny frequently inherited the entire name from their fathers, as in, an epitaph from the oases of Algeria, *DMS Themursae Hariani, patri merenti vixit annis (octaginta) fecit Harian(a) Themursa, filius* (*IRA* 1642).

[41] In earlier periods of Roman presence, African towns, designated as *pagi*, retained stronger traditions of Punic naming than did their neighbors in designated Roman *coloniae*. Exogenous groups and their distinctive onomastic customs were similarly concentrated in specific areas of Byzacena, Mauretania Caesariensis, and Tingitana (see *IAM*; Le Bohec 1986; Sartre 1975, 153).

of cultural, cultic, or "ethnic" differences from local populations. The equivalent position of *Punicus* and *Iudaeus*, then, cannot explicate the use of *Iudeus* in Pompeius' name.

An alternative possibility is that *Iudaeus* could refer to a place. As an abstract word, *Iudaeus* resembles an adjectival form of a designated region (*Judaea*) and occupies the same onomastic position as do toponymics.[42] Could *Iudeus* function, in this inscription, as a toponym? Such a suggestion appears reasonable, because Roman African names frequently integrate precise geographic information. A partially preserved epitaph displayed in the coastal museum in Lampta, Tunisia, for example, attests a husband and wife whose names are marked with the *cognomen* of *Leptiminius/a*—"Leptiminian", or "of Leptiminus"—indicating their town of origin.[43] Exogenous North Africans also attached toponyms to the end of their names to identify themselves with a particular group, or region of origin.[44] The use of toponyms and geographically based names remains common among North African individuals of Syrian, Greek, Gallic, Egyptian, and North African origin or lineage.[45] More inscriptions in Greek

[42] To adapt the pattern of interpretation established by Lassère for similar Spanish toponymics, then, people who bear these names would be described as "peut-être" *Judaean*, "ou d'origine" of this region (Lassère 1977, 392). But is this necessarily the case here? Though the position of *Iaudaeus* within the name suggests a translation appropriate for toponymics, other features of this and comparable inscriptions counter the probability that the word should be treated as such.

[43] Names discovered in the west, such as *Philipus Cyrenaicus* (*ILA*2 70) exemplify similar regional allegiances through toponyms.

[44] Syrians in Africa frequently terminated their names with references to their places of origin (*Iulia Palmyra; Iulia Syra*; Ἀυρέλια Σαβεῖνα Σύρα; Lassère 1977, 398–399) and lists of soldiers of the IIIrd Augustan Legion demonstrate this practice consistently (Le Bohec 1986, 186). Those from other Roman territories follow similar practices: Lassère classifies the cognomina of *C. Iulius Hispanus, M. Laetorius Hispanus*, and *P. Gargilius Ispanus* as "peût-etre Espagnols, ou d'origine espagnole" (Lassère 1977, 392). The distribution is such that all of the "Hispanus" names describe men and all the "Sura" names describe women. Such tendencies highlight the obscure relationship between gender and manner of name choice.

[45] Considerations of whether these toponymies marked individuals' birthplaces, or differently labelled the lineages of those born in North Africa, remain difficult to resolve. Would such elements only be introduced into names if they were those assigned to first or second generation immigrants to North Africa? Syrian names such as *Iulia Palmyra* (*CIL* 8. 2509), *Iulia Sidonia Felix* (*ILA*2, 809), *L. Vitius Syrophoenix* (*AE* 1916, 93), those for groups of Norici (*Cornelius Noreius*, *CIL* 8.8553), Egyptians (*Clodia Aegypta, CIL* 8.2458; *Geminia Ptolemais, ILA*2 1189), Gauls (*Scius Gallicus*, *CIL* 8.19333), and other names on inscriptions from the second century in Sitifis exemplify these patterns.

script predictably retain these toponymic, ethnic, or local markers than do their counterparts in Latin scripts.[46] One epitaph from Thamagudi for a Τ. Φλαουίος Μάξιμος Κρής Γορτύιος (*CIL* 8.12924), for example, appears to identify the original city (Gortyn) and region (Crete) of the deceased.[47] In conjunction, names that integrate Roman onomastic elements and non-African toponyms might indicate that the deceased engaged Roman onomastic conventions, but still drew attention to a different place of birth, *e.g., P. Gargilius Ispanus* (ILA 2, 2640).[48]

Could *Iudeus*, in this inscription, serve as a toponym that refers to Roman Judaea through an onomastic convention similar to that adopted by Leptiminians, Greeks and Syrians? P.W. Van der Horst has argued that the central problem with understanding the word *Iudaeus* as a geographic designation is that Judaea no longer served as a place-name for Roman Palestine in later periods (Van der Horst 1991, 68).[49]

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[46] Ἑλλάδιος (IRT 25) and τίτος Ὀυλέριος Ἀλεξάνδρος (*CIL* 8.1005) are eastern names that fall into this category. These names may possess more precise information about towns and cities of cultural origin.

[47] Though Greek onomastic systems encouraged the use of topographical markers and associations, such toponyms become integrated into paradigmatic Latin onomastic structure and choices. In the case above, it is unclear whether Κρής Γορτύιος is part of Φλαουίος's name, or a modification of it. The exact correlation between the use of Greek script and the cultural context of the deceased remains ultimately enigmatic. Nonetheless, it suggests that the people who retained the use of the Greek language were identifiably foreign: perhaps these were first-generation North Africans who had traveled directly from the east and were active users of Greek. Latin commemorative texts, however, also employ the same form, *e.g.*, Barrier and Benson (1908, 56–57, no. 1–17). A text comparable to that above, also from Thamagudi, is dedicated to a *C. Aelius, Cres, Gortunis* (*BCTH* 1908, no. 5).

[48] The name of a "Q. Marcius Suriacus *civis*" (Barrier and Benson 1908, no. 6) employs this pattern. The juxtaposition of the *cognomen* "Suriacus" with the text's announcement of Q. Marcius' citizen status (*civis*) may imply that the *cognomen* describes some degree of cultural affiliation. Such patterns are most popular among those of Syrian descent, especially those from Tadmor, or Palmyra, *e.g., Iulia Palmyra* (*IRA* 1640) and *Maximo Zabdo Hadriano Palm(yro)* (*IRA* 1638). The structure of these names emulates Latin, not Semitic, form.

[49] In her study of the epigraphic context of the word *Iudaeus*, Kraemer adds that: "Most of the other inscriptions lend themselves to the explanation that non-Jews who affiliated with Judaism either took on the term, perhaps as a self-designation, or gave the term as a proper name to their children. And it may well be that the term was necessary especially in situations where the Jewishness of the individual might not be apparent, not only in cases of burial near pagan graves (as Frey suggested) but in cases where the individual did not begin life as a Jew" (1989, 52–53). This argument is an interesting one to explore and relates directly to Kraemer's interpretation of North African Jewish inscriptions.

The North African occurrences of the word appear to be earlier than most attestations elsewhere in the Mediterranean, but Pompeius's third-century epitaph still significantly postdates Rome's renaming of Judaea. The related issue is complex because it implicates not simply how the Romans called the region, but how persons who *claimed* descent from the region referred to it.[50]

The entire structure of Pompeius's name, however, provides the most definitive indication that he is not of foreign Levantine origin: the Latin framework and choices of Pompeius's and his daughter's names, and *Pompeia*'s inheritance of the feminized form of her father's name, indicate the family's full embeddedness in their Cirta onomastic environment.[51] Even the physical aspect of the stone is entirely conventional for the region. This epitaph does not appear to represent that of a new immigrant who originally had been named in Roman Palestine or who had only recently encountered a Roman imperial onomastic system.[52]

Another possible explanation remains that *Iudaeus* is inserted into Pompeius's name for practical reasons of local differentiation. Perhaps the addition of the word *Iudaeus* serves to mark this *Pompeius Restutus* as different from another one commemorated in the same town. The epigraphic record cannot verify this (through the proximate presence of identically named Restuti), though one might suppose that the supplementation of Pompeius's daughter's name on the epitaph would provide enough information to eliminate this sort of confusion. Taken in isolation, therefore, it is difficult to interpret the sense of the word *Iudeus* in this inscription. An improved understanding of this use of the word cannot be entirely explained by comparisons with local analogues, but must be supplanted by its comparison with uses of *Iudaeus* within other North African onomastic contexts.

When examined in a group, certain patterns emerge in the attested uses of *Iudaeus* within this and other North African names. First, each

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[50] Modern nationalist movements demonstrate comparable conflicts between groups' designations of identical regions in comparable ways. Among others, see discussion in Houtman (1999, 13).

[51] During this period, Palestinian name frameworks, name choices, and scripts were normatively Greek, rather than Latin/Roman. The *cognomen* "Restutus" and the *nomen* "Pompeius" are extremely common in Sirta, but not in Roman Palestine.

[52] The regionally typical aspects of the stone's appearance and inscription caution against assumptions about the foreign origins of the deceased.

of these examples probably dates to the late second to early third centuries. Second, they derive from very limited adjacent regions of modern Algeria and Morocco in Numidia, Mauretania Sitifensis, Mauretania Caesariensis, and Mauretania Tingitana. They mark the epitaphs of both men and women whose names mostly mimic forms of Roman *tria* and *duo nomina*. One text from Constantine, Numidia, commemorates *Iulius Ania|[n]us Iudeus* (Le Bohec no. 69), while a small cluster of texts from Sitifensis include the epitaphs of *Caelia Tha|lassa Iudaea* (Le Bohec no. 73) and *Avilia As|ter Iudea* (Le Bohec no. 74). One epitaph from Caesarensis commemorates *Furfanius | Honoratus | Iudeus*, while one Tingitanian epitaph from Sala commemorates Μαρεῖνος | Πτολεμαῖος Ἰουλδῆος (Le Bohec no. 78; Figure 1). The exact spellings and scripts used to render the word vary, as do the languages used and accompanying name choices. But in all cases, *Iudaeus* (and any of its variants) is the last word to appear in the name cluster, and the gender and case of the word agree with the gender and case of the name of the person commemorated (*e.g.*, Le Bohec nos. 69–71). Can further comparison of these patterns with similar North African onomastic elements better illuminate this one?

Inclusion of the names of an epitaph's dedicant remained conventional in earlier Latin commemorative inscriptions in Africa. Dedicants were frequently family members of the deceased; common onomastic features were therefore frequently preserved in the names of both the dedicant and the deceased. Pompeius's epitaph follows this pattern. The onomastic relationship between the dedicant and the deceased, however, is easier to review in the case of sons dedicating their fathers—sons are frequently accorded the same name as their fathers, *e.g.*, *DMS C. Lollius Felix vixit Annis LXXXXI C. Lollius Felix Filius suis sumptis Fec* (*IRA* no. 1624; Aïn Mtoussa). A similar onomastic structure and choice is demonstrated by a Christian of Hadrumentan who dedicated an epitaph for his daughter, who had inherited her *cognomen, Chrestina*, from her father, marked as *Chrestinus*.[53] In each of these cases, traditional

[53] This early Christian inscription is presently displayed in the archaeological museum in Sousse, Tunisia, and marks the dedicants and deceased as being *Chrestinus/a*. The epitaph commemorates the dedication of an Aurelius Chrestinus and his wife to their "innocen(t)iam" Caleia Chrestina: *Aurelius Chrestinus et Caelia Dativa Caeliae Chrestinae fecti ob innoceniam fecerunt*. It appears that *Chrestinus/a* is used here as part of the name, which is shared by the husband, wife, and deceased child. A possibility remains that this *Chrestinus* is a rendering of a locally unusual name of *Christianus*. Though Chrestianus is a rare *cognomen*/onomastic adjective, it demonstrates the possibilities of cognominal

name forms that integrate specific information are preserved through onomastic patterns that describe family relationships.

Yet *Iudaeus* is not used in the same way as the names and adjectives within these other African dedicatory epitaphs. Unlike the *Chrestina* inscription in which the dedicant and commemorated bear the same adjective in each of their names, only the name of the deceased is labeled as *Iudaeus* in the *Iudaeus* inscriptions. The named dedicant is never similarly described (Le Bohec nos. 70, 73, 74, 75). I suggest that this pattern is a significant one: in these texts, *Iudaeus* only appears to be an appropriate label for the deceased and the adjective may never have been part of the living Africans' names at all. The word appears to represent onomastic practices enacted at the time of the commemoration of the deceased, but, perhaps, not those accorded at birth.

The scholarly quandary about the use and translation of the term *Iudaeus* is not new. For over two decades, arguments about the appropriate English translation of *Ἰουδαῖος/Iudaeus* have abounded. Thomas Kraabel has argued that the word *Iudaeus* served as a geographic designation of "one from Judaea" (Kraabel 1982, 445–64), while H. Solin has countered that rather than being an ethnic or geographic designation, the word *Iudaeus* implies one's belonging to a "Jewish" religious community (Solin 1983, 651). Van der Horst, as already noted, argued that *Iudaeus* could not serve as a geographic marker. More recently, Ross Kraemer has argued against many rigid definitions for the word. She reasonably suggests that *Iudaeus*, in fact, encompasses a greater "range of possible connotations" than its description as an "ethnic" designation could allow (1989, 52).[54] As a result, she notes that "*Ioudaios* (and its permutations) must be interpreted with care" (1989, 48).[55] These

representations of cultural affiliations as well as places. This epitaph could be dated to an earlier period because of its form and its inclusion of the dedicant, although the lack of context for the text renders this unclear.

[54] Kraemer questions authors who have translated the word in the North African inscriptions as an "ethnic" designation (Hirschberg 1974). She quotes Hirschberg on this point: "the authors of the inscriptions mostly do not try to conceal the religious and national identity of the buried. In comparatively many cases, we find the ethnic appellation, 'Jew' or 'Jewess'" (1989, 36).

[55] Kraemer suggests that the word could also be used simply as a name, or as a name for a pagan adherent to Judaism. So too suggests P.W. van der Horst (1991, 68). Van der Horst also states that this word would serve as a vehicle of identification similar to the depiction of a shofar or menorah beside a text, and argues that an indication of Judaean provenance is frequently difficult to prove (1991, 69).

and other studies result from the examination of the use of the term throughout the ancient Mediterranean.[56]

I suggest that a particularly North African use of the word *Iudaeus* may contrast with its uses in other Mediterranean contexts. First, despite the relative rarity of its allocation in the North African onomastic corpus, the word is used, proportionally, more frequently among North African names than among Jewish names within texts from other areas. Indeed, Kraemer claims that out of the total of 1700 extant ancient Jewish inscriptions from the Mediterranean, only 34 epitaphs and 10 miscellaneous inscriptions contain the adjective *Iudaeus* (Kraemer 1989, 37). If this is in fact the case, the number of its attestations in North Africa (8) is disproportionately high, considering the particularly small total number of Jewish names recorded within the African corpus (approximately 64 in total).[57]

Third, despite the variable ways *Iudaeus* is employed within inscriptions in Western Europe and Asia Minor, the use of the term in North Africa appears to be internally consistent.[58] A contextual examination of the North African use of *Iudaeus* does not necessarily elucidate particularly local meaning of the onomastic marker, but it does illuminate a temporal and regional patterns for its use. The application of the marker only to the name of the deceased, furthermore, suggests that the word's meaning may be linked to its specific commemorative function. *Iudaeus* might serve as a targeted, context-dependent, onomastic marker that explicitly announces to passersby, or to deity, an important facet

[56] Examples of the use of the word *Iudaeus* elsewhere in the Mediterranean appear, either in funerary contexts in votive texts, or as adoption as a proper name. For example, one *Ἰουδαῖος* of the *genos* of the Jews is mentioned as having been manumitted in Achaea in 163/2 B.C.E. (*Ach.* 42, *IJO* I). This demonstrates a clear instance where Ιουδαῖος is used substantively as a unique name.

[57] The number of identified Jewish inscriptions has shifted slightly over the past two decades due to both the discovery of new inscriptions and the disqualification of others. Despite these variations, the proportion Kraemer identifies (1989, 39) remains largely accurate. For adjustments to previous collections of Jewish inscriptions, see introduction of *IJO* 1 (2004).

[58] Uses of the term in other contexts include votive texts, such as one text from Europe (*CIJ* 678), one dedication from Smyrna in Asia Minor (*CIJ* 741) and two dedications at the temple to the god Pan in Egypt (*CIJ* 2. 445). Most of these other texts derive from earlier periods and are in Greek (1989, 47–48).

of the cultural identity of the deceased.[59] Pompeius Restutus may have born an entirely conventional North African name in his lifetime—his name may only have acquired the *Iudaeus* marking after his death.

(b) Additional Markers of Difference: Place-names, Names' Forms, and Choices

Still other Jewish inscriptions use onomastic means to index alterity from their broader cultural environments, but do so in ways conventional for those of exogenous populations in North Africa. Some Jewish names, for example, incorporate foreign toponymics into their naming formulae. Jewish texts that adhere to Greek naming formulae and scripts, predictably include foreign toponymics more frequently. One effaced inscription from Gammarth identifies the possible Hellenistic and Asian origins, or lineage of the deceased (Ἀ[σι]ατικὸς Μ[α]ρίνου (υἱειὸς) Τ[ι]Ιβεριεύς, Le Bohec no. 28).[60] Other Jewish texts, on the other hand, appear to incorporate ethnic or toponymic information into more typical Latin duonominal and trinominal forms. Μαρεῖνος| Πτολεμαῖιος's name includes a toponymic that indicates that he may be of Greek Egyptian (Ptolemaic) origin (Le Bohec no. 78; Figure 1). These methods of signifying differences of origins or ethnicity in names are regionally unexceptional: comparisons for these patterns, discussed in the previous section, abound. Some Jewish individuals, just like others from North Africa's additional minority populations, occasionally integrated toponymics into their names' structures.

Different inscriptions signified onomastic alterity through the use of non-Latin scripts, onomastic frameworks, and personal names on epitaphs. Allogenic name formulas and choices are apparent within some Jewish inscriptions from the western provinces, especially in Carthage and other trade centers (*e.g.*, Le Bohec no. 30a). Some of these include

[59] One other tendency might account for the method of placement of these words. The situation of *Iudaeus-a* at the end of a name lends itself to the rhythm and appearance of a tri-or duo-nominal form. Unlike inscriptions from other locations, such as Rome, which use the word as a modifier in other parts of the inscriptions, these inscriptions appear deliberately to affix this term to the name itself. This pattern might be better elucidated if greater numbers of dedicants' names were preserved on epitaphs, but most inscriptions exclude this information. This is a pattern characteristic of a shift in epitaph content throughout the Empire (Meyer 1990).

[60] Le Bohec asserts that Τ[ι]βεριύς is an ethnic to describe the deceased (Le Bohec no. 78). In this way, he argues that the deceased is of Palestinian origin. In contrast, Lassère interprets Τ[ι]βερίυς to be the father's name (1977). The state of the stone and the syntax of the name preserve this ambiguity.

Greek onomastic formulae that govern names formed from Semitic roots without Punic precedent; from Carthage, the name *Sabira*, (possibly related to the Semitic root *SPR*) falls within this category (Le Bohec no. 55), as does the name Σαλονεῖνα (Le Bohec nos. 30–32).[61] The apparent local rarity of these names, combined with their renderings in regionally unusual Greek scripts therefore suggests that those commemorated were probably individuals, whose personal names reflect those chosen and assigned elsewhere (*e.g.*, Le Bohec no. 78; no. 16).[62] Such patterns are common among exogenous populations and immigrants within North Africa.

The find contexts of Jewish texts with idiosyncratic names, furthermore, correspond with common patterns in the onomastic record of the western provinces: Greek and exogenous Semitic names remained more common in specific areas by ports and entrepôts that sustained steady influxes of eastern traders. Major centers, like Carthage and Volubilis, were consistently resettled by immigrants who retained locally unusual Levantine and Greek naming practices (Lassère 1977; Simon 1957).[63] Demographic fluctuations account for many of these regional variations in onomastic practice.[64]

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[61] An *Aurelia Sabeina Sura* has a name of comparable composition (Lassère 1977, 374).

[62] In later periods, single personal names only rarely refer to idiosyncratic geographic contexts. Rather than being diagnostic of Jewish groups (Le Bohec 1981b, 219–222), these geographic names are generally popular thoughout North Africa and only rarely related to allogenic origin of the deceased. See discussion in Ennabli (2000).

[63] In many regions, composite onomastic frameworks became as conventional as the diversity of North Africa's residents. Additional questions inevitably extend from names' careful review. For example, when, if at all, did these indigenous and allogenic minorities commemorate their names differently than their conventionally named neighbors? Did they preserve the names that they were accorded at birth, or did they alter their names in a foreign context? Did they appear to use names to indicate similarities to, or differences from, local naming practices, and, if so, how? Did only first-generation inhabitants of the region preserve the frameworks of their culture of origin? Did subsequent generations adopt Roman African naming tendencies more readily? And how did they name their children? Analyses of Lassère and others assist the development of close evaluations of these onomastic practices.

[64] Attention to the context, then, facilitates the interpretation of names. For example, a Greek name would be unusual within Mauretania Tingitana, but would be conventional within Tripolitania. A Syrian name discovered within areas where Syrian troops were stationed would be anticipated, but more unusual in other areas. For additional discussion, see Sartre (1975).

Most Jewish onomastic frameworks and formulae in the second and third centuries appear to have employed the same onomastic conventions as their African neighbors in the western provinces. Like their neighbors' names, Jews' names emulated (usually inexactly) the onomastic forms of Romans and Roman Africans who possessed higher status. Jews' name structures incorporated onomastic features that preserved information about family relationships; name choices similarly responded to contemporaneous political and social realities. In specific cases, Jewish names, structures, and choices indexed degrees of cultural difference from regional custom, but in select instances, certain distinguishing onomastic features may have only been applied to a name after the decease of its owner. Jewish name forms and choices, in most cases, indexed affinity with a broader Roman North African culture.

II. Onomastic Patterns in the Later Principate: Western Provinces

Greater shifts in the political climate throughout the Roman Empire yielded commensurate changes in North Africa's demographic, linguistic, and cultural environment and, in turn, its regional onomastic practices. After the universal grant of citizenship throughout the Empire, the need and desire to use names to demonstrate status steadily decreased. Onomastic demonstrations of citizenship became nearly superfluous (Meyer 1990),[65] and the rigid rules that had once enabled names to encode status and lineage became entirely unfettered. In conjunction with the spread of Christianity throughout the empire, new priorities and values informed individuals' adoptions of name forms and choices in the African provinces.

[65] Though some scholars have recently challenged traditional explanations for the onomastic shifts in the Empire (Salway 1994), scholarly consensus continues to correlate name structures and restrictions on citizenship (Salomies 2001; Meyer 1990).

A. *Name Structure*

The ramifications of the rupture of Rome's onomastic system manifested themselves in various ways throughout Africa and the rest of the Empire. First, indications of one's status within the Empire, let alone in onomastic form, grew superfluous. Even the exalted status the *tria nomina* had once demonstrated lost import, as did other explicit assertions of individual's citizen status that accompanied a name.[66] By the early fourth century C.E., local onomastic formulae had begun to shift ever more drastically—the *cognomen* replaced the *praenomen* as the means of expressing the personal name (Kajanto 1963, 3).[67] The upper classes retained the use of the *praenomen* until the fourth century, although most other strata of Roman society had eschewed it by the first and second centuries (Kajanto 1963, 3).[68]

Over time, this embrace of the "single name system" served as the most significant shift in North African naming patterns.[69] Later epitaphs

[66] Announcements of one's *tribus*, or *civis* status, are among these. The consummate corruption of the system was exhibited in the third centuries and fourth centuries, when it even became possible for children to inherit names from their mothers (Kajanto 1963, 4).

[67] Kajanto describes how the *praenomen* had lost a great deal of importance; "numbers of *praenomina* had eventually been limited to about 30, of which only 16–18 were in common use." (1963, 3). Aristocratic names remained exceptional—generally during the Empire the number of names assigned to one individual tended to diminish, while the names among the aristocracy multiplied (1963, 4).

[68] Greek-language inscriptions within these territories were perhaps the latest to retain a *cognomen*-based system (Kajanto 1963, 11; *cf.* Salway 1994). In later Christian inscriptions from Carthage, status is differently described. For example, the word *servus* again surfaces in later Latin Christian texts. The meaning of the word, however, appears to designate a chosen status in relationship with Christ, rather than a subservient relationship to a master (Kajanto 1963, 7; *cf.* Diehl 767A). Nonetheless, certain individuals, such as doctors and tradesmen or members of "clerical hierarchy" continued to identify their status in epitaphs (Kajanto 1963, 9). Kajanto suggests that "it is possible that the rejection of the idea of slavery influenced the etiquette of cemeteries so that it was considered un-Christian to reveal that the deceased was, or had been a slave" (Kajanto 1963, 9). Much of Kajanto's analysis of the relationship follows this line of thought. His assumptions about status and wealth and, about the poor serving as the base for early converts to Christianity underlie his analyses of onomastic transitions.

[69] One slight exception to this name structure is the continued use of the *agnomen*. In both earlier and later periods, the *agnomen* designated a person's *used* name, as opposed to their *given* name through the structure "X qui et Y" (Kajanto 1963, 31). This structure was relatively rare in the Empire, but appears periodically within the North African onomastic record. The interpretation of this name structure is difficult, as it is unclear, in most circumstances, why the different name would be adopted. This *agnominal* structure differs from the use of the *signa*, or, nick-name, but both types of

for men and women in both Rome and Carthage demonstrate a nearly complete abandonment of the *tria* and *duo nomina*.[70] Single names, which had once marked those of the lowest status, now were used equally to mark members of the upper classes.[71]

B. *Name Choice*

A broader range of acceptable personal names in North Africa accompanied the freeing of the name from stricter Roman frameworks. The apparent augmentation of these onomastic choices probably related to the expanded access to the Latin language to those of Punic descent, in addition to the preference for preserving Christian sentiments in names for increasing numbers of North Africans.[72] The combination of these factors suggests why Latin names with Christian sentiments continued to gain particular popularity among Punic-speaking African populations during the later period. Names such as *Adeodatus,-ta, Deogratias, Deusdat, Habetdeus, Quodiubet, Vincetdeus*, and *Quodvultdeus* (Kajanto 1963, 102; *IFCC* 2.75, 552, 589, 686; *IRT* no. 837, 845) were Christian names particularly popular in Punico-African and Roman African contexts.[73]

Other name choices integrated Punic, Roman, and Christian sentiments and qualities. Some of the most common names of this sort include diminutive versions of Latin words or the modification of Punic name roots, such as *Gemellus* (Kajanto 1963, 67), *Abdentulus* (Diehl 2799a), and *Marculus* (Diehl 3641). Certain names were derived from

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names are classified as *supernomina* (Kajanto 1963, 31). Also see discussion of *agnomina* in Horsely (1992) and Williams (2007).

[70] Some scholars such as Toutain have suggested that naming tendencies were simplified in North Africa because "the onomastic tradition of the native population had reasserted itself in a tendency toward simpler name forms" (Toutain 1895, 188). Whether the name forms of the region were "simpler" due to their "native" origin is not necessarily clear or helpful, though such analysis seems to apply colonial understandings of indigenous African populations.

[71] More elaborate tombs and expensive funerary mosaics commemorated the lives of more exalted individuals with single names. Examples include elaborate Christian mosaic tombs in Carthage (*IFCC* 3. 428, 429) and from Popthensis (*ILA* 1174).

[72] During earlier periods, many Punic names were preserved in Punic scripts and in Punic inscriptions (Ben Abdallah 1986). As the periods of the flourishing of these names in Punic inscriptions precedes the period in which Jewish inscriptions were introduced, I refer to them in their later incarnations when they more directly relate to the interpretation of Jewish names.

[73] For Punic and Neo-Punic names, see discussion and prosopography in Halff (1963–4, 63–163), Ben Abdallah (1983), and Jongeling (1984).

the *cognomina* of parents and supplemented with the suffix of *-anus, -na*, or *-ianus, -iana* (*e.g., Victorianus*, etc.) Other types of Latin names retained the cores of transliterated Greek names and affixed the suffix *-ius* to them (Kajanto 1963, 68, 71). Names such as *Amantius* (Cyprian, *Ep*. 77.3.2; *Bardo*, no. 138), *Constatius, Basileus, Asterius* (*CIL* 8.9585), and *Zosimus* (Lassère 1997, 339–340), are among the most common examples of this pattern in pagan as well as Christian inscriptions in North Africa and Rome (Kajanto 1963, 74, Table 19; *PCBE* I, 87).

Still other principally Latin-sounding names retained great popularity throughout the African western provinces between the third and sixth centuries. While personal names varied significantly, some of the most common included male and female variants of *Restitutus/a* (*e.g.*, *Bardo*, no. 95; *PCBE* I, 965–967), *Donatus/*a (*e.g., PCBE* I, 283–329), *Maximus/a* (*e.g., PCBE* I, 715–740), *Iulius/*a (*e.g.*, *PCBE* I, 611–620), *Fuscus* (*e.g., PCBE* I, 514–515), *Riddeus* (*e.g., CIL* 8.22758; 27309; 27173), *Ianuarius* (*e.g.*, *Bardo*, nos. 14, 34) and *Rufus* (*e.g., PCBE* I, 1008–9). Other names that were particularly popular for women included those such as *Margarita* (*e.g., PCBE* I, 698) and *Matrona* (*e.g., PCBE* I, 713).

Additional naming systems and choices, however, continued to converge in North African international entrepôts. Especially in Carthage, different naming strategies developed to incorporate Greek and Semitic naming sentiments into Latinate forms. Formulations of Latin-sounding names from Greek words for biblical concepts, such as *Sabbatius* and *Paschasius*, follow this pattern (Kajanto 1963, 171; *IFCC* 2.281, 182). Perhaps for similar reasons, some personal names with toponymic roots became increasingly popular. During earlier periods, personal names with geographic roots probably implied more direct connections between the name and the origin of the deceased; personal names of *Marinos* and *Sidonius*, for example, appear commonly in inscriptions that designate North Africans of Levantine descent (Sartre 1975).[74] In later periods, however, correlations between geographic names and their cultural implications become murkier.[75] Geographic names soared in

[74] Names with eastern geographic referents, such as *Marinus* and *Alexander*, also may signify the Macedonian, Greek, and Egyptian cultural contexts of the deceased (Lassère 1977, 398–405). Tal Ilan also attests to the use of comparable names in Palestinian inscriptions (2002, 335).

[75] It is unclear whether such names might have been conferred because of their bearers' occupation or lifestyle. For example, a trader from Sidon perhaps would call himself "Sidonius" in trading contexts, where at home, such a designation would be

popularity in the fifth and sixth centuries, when names such as *Sidonius* (*IFCC* 1.30) or *Egiptia* (*IFCC* 2.115) only rarely marked individuals of Levantine or Egyptian origins.[76]

C. *Jewish names*

Most identifiably Jewish names are from inscriptions of this later period (approximately 24). As among earlier inscriptions, Jewish names show regional variations in their adoption of locally conventional and unconventional naming patterns and choices. Variable patterns of naming throughout these periods, demonstrate commensurate ranges of cultural identification among Jewish populations in Africa.

1. *Onomastic Similarity*

Jewish names from the later period embraced the conventions of North African name choice and the regional trend toward simplification of onomastic structures. The single personal name becomes most common in Jewish contexts: terracotta stelai from Gammarth that simply read *Rufus* and *Donata* (Le Bohec nos. 29, 49) demonstrate this tendency (Figure 3). One effect of this trend is its restriction of demonstrably "Jewish" features in a name: single-name structures furnish diminished information about the context and family of the deceased.[77]

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less diagnostic and a different name might be used. Alternatively, a slaveowner or parent might have chosen the name Sidonius for an individual for numerous other possible reasons. Kajanto provides a comparison of geographic names, which are more or less likely to be used in Latin adjectival form (1963, 63).

[76] During earlier and later periods, onomastic structures and choices can signify cultural difference for the deceased in various ways: they can name a place of origin specifically, adjectivally, or incorporate the name of the place into the *cognomen* or unique name itself. Names may identify indigenous or allogenic contexts, or identify cultural affiliations. Though the degree to which choice or compulsion inform these name assignments is elusive, such cases may represent attempts to mark cultural differences among those commemorated.

[77] Some texts include agnominal name structure. One epitaph from Mauretania Sitifensis marks the *Memo+ria in|nocenti<um>|Istablici qu|i et Donati. P(osuit)|frater ip|sius Peregrinu(s) q(ui et) Mosattes, de Iude[i]s SVIS EIV* (Le Bohec no. 75). At first glance, the name *Mosattes* appears to signify one that required changing after Peregrinus/Mosattes became *Istablicus*'s Christian *frater*. Such an interpretation is possible and tempting, but it cannot be presumed to be definitive—after all, Istablicus/Donatus, who had commissioned the epitaph, had also changed his name in a way that does not appear diagnostic

Past scholarship has asserted that certain name choices within later Jewish epitaphs exemplified idiosyncratic Jewish or "Palestinian" traits (Le Bohec 1981b, 182). A supporting argument for this trend derives from attention to a tendency in some African Jewish epitaphs, like that of their North African counterparts, to use the vocative to commemorate the single names of the deceased. These include the direct address to *Macxime!* or *Pompeiane!* on an epitaph (Le Bohec nos. 51, 52). Le Bohec interprets this use of the vocative as diagnostic of Jewish inscriptions: he has argued that this type of address was employed in Roman Palestine and that North African Jewish use of the vocative in epitaphs evokes particularly Palestinian onomastic practice (1981b, 226). The employment of the vocative form of the name in Jewish texts, however, does not appear to be idiosyncratic among Roman African (or Roman Italian) epitaphs at all. This method of calling to the dead in the vocative grows increasingly common within North African, Roman, and Roman provincial commemorative texts from this period, *e.g., Constanti* (*ILS* 6732; Kajanto 1963, 33, 34, 61; *cf.* Bartoccini 1928–9, nos. 1, 3, 11).[78] This tendency to use the vocative form when recording names on Jewish epitaphs, therefore, indexes local Roman African commemorative conventions, rather than necessarily idiosyncratic or "Palestinian" ones.

The redundant expression of filiation in Jewish texts is another aspect of later Jewish name formulation that Le Bohec has argued signifies internal consistency and regional idiosyncrasy. Later African Jewish texts occasionally supply explicit markers of filiation, despite the inflections within names that already express filial relationships, *e.g., Asterius filius Rustici* (Le Bohec no. 14). Le Bohec argues that this redundant expression of filiation deliberately evokes patterns in ascribing filiation within Semitic languages, such as Hebrew (X בן Y; Le Bohec 1981, 226). Such an argument appears superfluous, however, in light of the

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of particularly Christian, rather than particularly pagan, contexts (Rutgers 1997, 249). Could Mosattes' supernomen be attributed to another cause that is incidental to his explicitly Christian commemoration? Multiple undetectable factors are involved in the interpretation of such supernomina. Another text from Bulla Regia commemorates a *+Sabbat|(i)olus q(u)i et Iuben|tius posi|tus in | [pace]* (Le Bohec no. 66). In this case, it is not entirely clear whether *Sabbatiolus* is the older or newer name. Unlike the previous example, which might point to the taking of a new name due to conversion, this name might indicate that *Iubentius*'s agnomen differentiated him from another *Iubentius* in the same family or community (*cf.* Horsley 1992, 1011–1017).

[78] Both Greek and Latin epitaphs from Rome and Carthage employ the vocative address in the name of the deceased (Kajanto 1963, 33, 34, 61).

Figure 3. Epitaph of *Donata*, Gammarth Catacombs; Carthage Museum, Tunisia
Photo: Author

pattern's presence within other local North African names. Though the practice of using explicit markers of filiation decreases in popularity in the later Empire, redundant markers of filiation continue to appear in North African votive and commemorative texts during the period, *e.g.*, *Adeodatus filius Erclani et Fortunules* (*RAC* 1930, 190, *cf.* Kajanto 1963, 5).[79] Jewish use of redundant filiation emerges as a practice similarly attested in other North African onomastic contexts (*cf.* Le Bohec 1981, 226).

[79] At times, African Latin names appear to employ redundant means to simultaneously emphasize filial relationships and status. Proper trinominal and duonominal systems automatically convey such information, but earlier and later inscriptions frequently provided more explicit announcements of filiation for both females and males, *e.g.*, *Cn. Terentius Cn. F.* (*CIL* 8.8986, *cf.* Lassère 1977, 223). Some of these include the abbreviation of *f.* in the nominal structure to indicate *filius* for males and *filia* for females (*ILAlg* 2.1.3873; *AE* 1968, 0571; *CIL* 8.22758). The insertions of these abbreviations both emphasize family relationship and assert "citizen" status (Salomies 2001, 84). Rutgers considers the order of these words to be significant (1995, 248–252).

B. *Name Choice*

In the fourth through sixth centuries, regionally popular Roman African names framed most Jewish name choices.[80] Later onomastic selections continued to reflect earlier name choices whose popularity persisted throughout the African and Roman territories, such as *Rufus* (Le Bohec no. 51), *Maximus* (Le Bohec no. 79), and *Iulia* (Le Bohec no. 13). Other Jewish names accorded with those that were particularly common both in late pagan and early Christian North African contexts, such as *Donatus* (Le Bohec no. 102), *Donata* (Le Bohec no. 49; Figure 3), and *Fuscus* (Le Bohec no. 17). Names such as *Matrona* (Le Bohec no. 80), *Rusticus* (Le Bohec no. 14), *Victorinus* (Le Bohec no. 20), and *Margarita* (Le Bohec no. 1) were also commonplace. Other names, such as *Macido* (Le Bohec no. 67) and *Sidonius* (Le Bohec no. 57), demonstrate the geographic personal names that had grown increasingly popular during this period.

Other choices of Jewish personal names correspond with broader onomastic trends in particular North African environments. Epitaphs marked with Jewish symbols include personal names that follow local tendencies to conflate multiple onomastic frameworks and elements. An *Abedeunis*, commemorated in fourth century Byzacena, bears the type of composite name construction so typical among Punic and Roman African populations throughout North Africa. The root of the name, "Abedo" and its variants (derived from the Semitic root "serve"/*ABD*), remained extremely popular in North African Roman and Christian names in the fourth and fifth centuries (Benz 1972, 54–55, 276–278; Ben Abdallah 1983, 23, 33; du Coudray de Blanchère 1897, appendix 1).[81] The use of the Greek genitive form to modify the

[80] Le Bohec counts 56 single Latin cognomina in the collection (in both Greek and Latin scripts). The numbers include: five from Byzacena, 38 from Africa Proconsularis, three from Numidia, three from Mauretania Sitifensis, four from Mauretania Caesariensis, and 2 from Mauretania Tingitana (Le Bohec 1981b, 224). 15 names appear to be Greek, while 32 of those Le Bohec lists are of Semitic or Hamitic origin (Punic, Syrian, Hebrew, Aramaic, or Libyan). This combined listing of these Semitic names prohibits a more nuanced study of onomastic distribution.

[81] Its meaning, "servant of god," is relatively equivalent to the popular translation of the name into the Latin translated form, *Habetdeus* (*IOILT* 23, *cf. ILT* 1147, 560, 1710). For discussions of the gender of the deceased, see Ben Abdallah (1986) and Jongeling (1984). In this case, however, the Latin name preserves the Greek genitive form in Latin script. This construction of the name recalls early Punic forms, such as שפט בן עבדא (*šafoṭus filius Abeddonis; CIS* 3.1.3803).

name's Semitic root appears to be irregular, especially when preserved in a Latin script, but this pattern is conventional within the complex onomastic systems attested in the region (*cf. Iader*; *Bardo*, no. 6). Other Jewish personal names, such as *Colomba* (Le Bohec no. 36) and *Riddeus* (Le Bohec no. 14), exemplify the same broader category of culturally conflated names: these also result from combinations of Greek, Punic, and Latin onomastic structures and choices (Le Bohec no. 221).[82]

Additional regionally popular naming patterns were employed within Jewish contexts. The name *Constatis*, which occurs in both Jewish and neighboring spheres, followed common patterns of Latin names in North Africa and Rome that derived from principle parts of verbs (Kajanto 1963, 61).[83] Different Jewish names conventionally integrated foreign words into Latin adjectival forms: regionally popular African Latinate names with Greek origins, such as *Ampliatus* (Le Bohec no. 37), *Asterius* (Le Bohec no. 25), and *Aster* (Le Bohec no. 24), appeared within both Jewish and North African prosopographies.[84]

Different Jewish names are also indistinguishable from those within African Christian contexts. Such names frequently possess biblical allusions and transliterate Greek and Semitic concepts into Latin scripts. Prominent examples of this pattern are permutations of the name *Sabbatis* (*cf.* Le Bohec nos. 83, 84, 64, 77, 95, 96).[85] Very few of these epitaphs, in fact, furnish additional information about the deceased that might help distinguish between Jewish and Christian uses of the

[82] In his discussion of the inscribed mosaics at the synagogue at Hammam Lif, J.-P. Darmon argues that the name *Riddeus* is unattested in North Africa (1994; 19). This argument relates to his transcription and interpretation of the mosaic, but it is untrue: other instances of names including, and similar to, *Riddeus* abound elsewhere in North Africa (*cf. Ridaus*, *ILT* 1477; *CIL* 8.27173). See my discussion below, in chapter five.

[83] This name, which appears twice within Le Bohec's collection, appears 10 times in Carthage, but 103 times in Rome (Kajanto 1963, 79). This may suggest Roman origins of this particular *Constatis*, or of a family relationship between the two occurrences of the name within Jewish texts.

[84] Other gentilic names, such as *Rufinus*, appear as *cognomina* in Jewish texts (cf. *ILT* 795, 1189, 1563).

[85] Epitaphs from Proconsularis commemorate *Sabbat, Sabbatiolus (qui et Iubentinus)*; while others from Byzacena include *Sabbatarius, Sabbaticus*, and one *Sabbatrai M. Cesarensis*. For discussion of a definitively Jewish context of the "Sabbat" names in Sicily, see discussion in Rutgers (1997, 251) and Tcherikover (1945, 248–249, 250–1). One of these names was found in an inscription in the Basilica of Ste. Monique (Le Bohec no. 20), and another Le Bohec has identified as "judaïsant" and a son of a Jew (Le Bohec no. 17).

name.[86] Le Bohec labels "Sabbat" names as of both "Jews" and "Judaisants" (Le Bohec 1981a, 197–8) and as Kajanto suggests, the name *Sabbatius*, which derives from a transliteration of the "Hebrew day of rest," (Kajanto 1963, 107) might have had a problematic sense for Christians who bore the name. "Sabbat" names, nonetheless, become extremely common in explicitly Christian contexts throughout Rome and Carthage in the fourth and fifth centuries (Ben Abdallah 1986).[87] The etymology of a name cannot necessarily explain the beliefs or religious affilliations of the person to whom the name has been conferred. These names—just as those of others—may have been simultaneously acceptable within Jewish and Christian cultural milieus during this period.[88]

[86] A previously reviewed inscription, to which Le Bohec accords a late date (fourth to fifth centuries) from Bulla Regia in contemporary Hammam Darradji, reads: *Sabbat|(i)olus q(u)i et Iubentinus pos|itus in | [pace]* (Le Bohec no. 66 = Carton 1915, 205). This use of the *supernomen* only raises more questions about the function of names. Did Sabbat|(i)olus adopt a new name (Iubentinus) when he chose more "Christianizing" behaviors? If so, did the name, in fact, originally have a Jewish valence to it, which he needed or wished to eschew as a "Christian"? Alternatively, could this "Iubentinus" have been a nickname of sorts, which was adopted for other reasons (a practice that is also attested in Kajanto's analysis)? If the latter is the case, "Sabbat" names could have been adopted by Christians or pagans, according the fashion of the time, despite the fact that it appears to have a Greek/Jewish etymology. Such names can only ambivalently be placed within these categories. For a useful discussion of *supernomina* and *agnomina*, see Horsely (1992) and note above.

[87] These names are part of the previous class of names in North Africa, which are composed with a foreign word, combined with the suffix *-ius*, but the "Sabbat" derived names are more complex to classify: they adhere to a particularly Christian naming pattern whereby significant holidays and days of the week are incorporated into names (*cf. Natalicus, Epiphanius, Paschasius-ia*). Discussion in Kajanto (1963, 106).

[88] Kajanto writes that "the name *Sabbatius-ia*, common in Christian Rome, was a new form, obtained through the suffix *-ius-ia*, of the women's name *Sabbatis*, which was frequent in Jewish and pagan inscriptions. *Sabbatis* is in turn derived from *sabbatum* or *sabbata*, the Hebrew word for the day of rest. It is problematic whether *Sabbatius-ia* was a name of distinctive Christian character. The Christians did not observe the Sabbath as a festal day, on the contrary, celebrating the Sabbath was considered judaizing and condemned. The frequency of the name in the Christian inscriptional material may have been a Jewish legacy. The Sabbath was a distinctive Jewish institution, and a personal name commemorating it, *Sabbatis*, is characteristically Jewish; considering the limited number of Jewish inscriptions from Rome (500 odd), the frequency of the name and its derivatives is considerable. As to the examples in the pagan epigraphic material, it has been suggested that these bearers of the name *Sabbatis* were non-Jewish proselytes. However, not a few of them must have been Jewish slaves and freedmen or their descendents. It is possible, then, that the Christians had inherited the name *Sabbatius* from the Jews, continuing to use it with little regard for its religious significance" (Kajanto 1963, 107).

2. *Onomastic Alterity*

Certain patterns of Jewish name choices index alterity to local North African patterns of naming. Some of these relate to geographical markers and adjectives historically associated with Jews throughout the Mediterranean. One text from the earliest margins of this period in Byzacena bears the personal name *Iudas* (Le Bohec no. 12).[89] The suggestion that the name *Iudas* is particularly "Jewish," rather than Christian, is convincing, if not definitively so.[90] Another epitaph from Volubilis describes a "Rabbi Yehuda" (Le Bohec no. 80). This personal name preserves in the Semitic script the adjectival sentiment conveyed by earlier *Iudaeus* markers.

Names derived from Greek or Semitic versions of biblical concepts and terms comprise another category of locally unusual Jewish names. Some names in this category, such as those related to "Sabbat," may have been accorded to Jewish individuals, but comparable North African Christian use of the "Sabbat" names renders such designations indeterminate. Others names, associated with biblical texts, appear to be used more exclusively by Jewish populations. These may include references to names of prophets or biblical figures, such as the prophet Nathan (*Νευθηνοῦ*, Le Bohec no. 25).[91] Such personal names are unusual in Africa and appear to deliberately index a distinct cultural milieu.

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[89] The only other place the name *Iudas* is attested is within Jewish inscriptions of Palestine and the Mediterranean diaspora. The name appears within Tal Ilan's compendium of Palestinian names, while Greek and Latin permutations of the name appear ten times within the inscriptions of Rome and three times in Southern Italy, Spain, and Southern Gaul (Noy 1998). Le Bohec states, "il s'agit du nom de Judas qui, à cause de l'apôtre felon, ne saurait être Chrétien" (1981a, 177). Though the name *Iudas* could be associated with both Judaism and Christianity, Le Bohec reasonably argues that the inscription could not be Christian because of the negative connotations the Semitic name bears among Christians. One fifth or sixth century text from Rome may substantiate this argument: it provides a record of an *Iudas* who was more appropriately renamed *Cyriacus* during baptism (Kajanto 1963, 119).

[90] Due to the borderline date of this inscription (third to fourth century C.E.), or the foreign context of the deceased, the name on the inscription is duonominal. The second name on the inscription, *Kosmu*, appears to be some sort of patronymic. *Kosmu*, derived from the Greek *Kosmos*, is unusual within its Roman North African context. The overwhelming majority of non-Latin names in North African epitaphs exhibit Latin/Punic or Punic/Libyan root patterns. Perhaps, this *Iudas* possessed direct connections with the Greek-speaking east, though such an interpretation is speculative. For a more extensive treatment of this issue, see the discussion of language use in chapter four.

[91] Depending on its restoration, Reuben [Ῥωπ (νιος); Le Bohec no. 5], might be included in this group. Names of the previous category are also extensively attested

This last category of Jewish names stands out in North African onomastic contexts; constituent names explicitly index difference from North African naming practices and similarity to pan-Mediterranean Jewish ones. Diachronic evaluations of Jewish naming patterns, however, demonstrate how statistically exceptional are these alternatively indexing names during later periods: they represent less than eight percent of North African Jewish names from later periods. It appears, therefore, that fewer Jewish names explicitly indexed alterity in later than in earlier periods.

III. Diachronic Onomastic Patterns: Tripolitania and the East

Conventional Latin onomastic practices had quickly dominated many regions of the western portions of Roman North Africa, but eastern areas of North Africa retained onomastic customs that corresponded with the distinct demographic and linguistic patterns of the region.[92] The *emporia* of Tripolitania sustained continuous trade and internal migrations from the predominantly Greek-speaking eastern cities of Cyrenaica and Berenice to much greater degrees than did their western neighbors.[93] Not surprisingly, greater proportions of Greek names derive from Tripolitania than from any other region of Roman North Africa (*e.g., IRT* 848, 469a, 799). Both Punic and Libyan onomastic practices, furthermore, retained greater diachronic popularity in the region.[94] In most areas of Tripolitania, therefore, Semitic as well as Greek onomastic features remained more common than they did in the west. Related naming formulae and choices shifted only slightly through time and persisted through the Vandal and Byzantine periods.[95]

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in Tal Ilan's recent lexicon of Jewish names from late antiquity (Ilan 2002). For extensive attestations for "Moses" and its variants, see Ilan (2002, 190); Ilan's lexicon covers earlier dates, and she argues that the name of Moses was not common during the Second Temple period. For this reason, it is attested with lower frequency in this lexicon; note also "Ρηπ /Reub." names and their variants (Ilan 2002, 209); "Neuthen" and its variants (Ilan 2002, 198–200); and "Yehuda" and its variants, for which there are 351 references total (Ilan 2001, 112–125).

[92] For more extensive evaluation see previous discussion in chapter two.

[93] Mattingly explains that both eastern and western areas of Tripolitania were frequently subject to the same raiding tribes and political circumstances (1995, 174, 177).

[94] For discussions of the language patterns that relate to these onomastic patterns, see discussions in chapters two and four.

[95] In Lepcis, many preserved names are Punic, while enclaves of Tripolitanian indigenous tribes (Garamantes), as well as Roman garrisons of Libyan soldiers, supply some

A. *Name Structure*

Tripolitanian names followed frameworks of their corresponding language groups. Greek and Semitic onomastic practices emphasize filiation and express it differently than do Latinate systems. For example, traditional Greek names might record a personal name for the deceased and a second name in the form of the genitive case to describe a person's parentage, or patronage *e.g.*, Ἀμμώνιος πτολεμαίου (CIL 8.2144).[96] Occasionally, in the Greek onomastic system, a name might simply be expressed as a unique name such as the commemoration of (Λύκιος) (*IRT* 719), or it might record toponymic information, *e.g.*, Ἀυραλιος Ἀτταλου (*IRT* 312).[97] Through the third century in Tripolitania, the presence or absence of a patronymic indicated status; an individual with only one personal name may have been a slave, while one accorded a patronymic would not have been.[98] Some Greek names in the region eventually integrated the trinominal structure so popular in the Latinate system (*e.g., IRT* 310a), but during later periods the single name formula also became conventional for Greek naming systems in Tripolitania, where it marked individuals of high and low status.[99]

The Punic onomastic system expresses filiation slightly differently than does the Greek. Uninflected languages like Punic require explicit articulations of family relationships to describe the parentage of the deceased. Related formulations list the personal name of the deceased

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of the most concentrated attestations of names in Libyan. The ostraca at Bu Njem have been the source of some of the most thorough studies of African bilingualism from the first and second centuries (Adams 1992; 1994). Most of these studies scrutinize the syntax of inscriptions to attempt to determine to what degree and how Libyan soldiers understood and wrote Latin (Parca 2000; Adams 1990, etc.).

[96] In its earliest forms in fifth-century Greece, Greek onomastic form retained a single personal name (Platon, Solon, etc.; Salomies 2001, 81) through its adoption in the Mediterranean, the Greek name grew more complex in the Roman world.

[97] Women's names follow different conventions. They might be accorded two names in the nominative case, or might explicitly use the formula for "daughter of," "Θυγατὴρ *e.g.*, μναμεῖον Θευδότας Θυγατρὸς Λιλανο [...] ετου τειμοκράτους ἐτελεῦ[τησεν] followed by the genitive case of parent's (or husband's) name (*IRT* 749).

[98] It is possible that unique name choice could have been restricted to specific class and status, but this connection remains difficult to systematically identify. The irregularity and elasticity of the naming framework prevents definitive conclusions on such bases.

[99] In underground burial areas in Tripolitania, in both Sirta and Ain Zara, many of the Greek names preserved were single names. This pattern also was common in Lepcis, as in IRT 313.

(X) and a description of his or her relationship to another person (Y): the formulas "X *bn* Y (X son of Y)", or "X *bt* Y (X daughter of Y)" are standard in Punic and Neo-Punic texts to describe a person's patriline, *e.g., Idniba'al bn Arish Pilon* (*IRT* 319).[100]

B. *Name Choice*

Personal name choice in Tripolitania is extremely unpredictable, because it reflects the ranges of Greek, Punic, and Libyan names in circulation; therefore I resist facile summary of it here. The proximity of the area to Cyrenaica and Egypt, in addition to the influx of Greek-speaking traders from other areas of the Mediterranean to the region, expanded the range of name choices through time and prevented the development of strict consistency among them. Names with Semitic and Hamitic roots remained more popular in this region and were preserved in both Latin and Greek scripts, even after Neo-Punic scripts had fallen out of attested use.

C. *Jewish Names*

Evidence for Jewish naming in Tripolitania is limited to six examples, all of which are in Greek scripts.[101] Each of these texts is of rather secure Jewish provenance. Most names were discovered in underground burial complexes that date to later periods.

The majority of readable epitaphs derive from one hypogeum in Oea. One epitaph marks a Μαζαζαυλᾳ, (Le Bohec no. 4) while

[100] These names are transliterated within *IRT* into Latin scripts. One votive Neo-Punic text from Lepcis Magna identifies the donor as *Idniba'al ben Hannoba'al* (*Riv. Trip.* III, 99–105), also Levi Della Vida (1935, 27). For additional examples, and within their Semitic scripts, see *CIS* (1.1. 431; 2.3, 3908, 3908.2, 3909, 4235).

[101] Le Bohec includes one inscription in Latin, for a certain *Agag*, among these (Le Bohec no. 2). There is absolutely no evidence for the inclusion of this text as Jewish: Le Bohec's classification rests on Bartoccini's speculation that the name is similar to that of the biblical *Agag* and that the deceased, therefore, is Jewish (1927–1928, n. 51). Not only is the *Agag* in the Bible an enemy of Israel and, therefore, a strange name to emulate, but the large number of Semitic names commemorated within the same burial complex implies that such names from Punic contexts were quite common throughout this particular region.

another marks a Ῥώπ…[102] The latter includes τῷ υἱῷ ("for his son") to indicate paternal relationship, and a Ζοσίμου, "son of Zosimos" (Le Bohec no. 4). The latter inscription was in deplorable condition even before the site was bombed in World War II: the quality of the photographs of the site curtail possibilities of positing the relationship between the Ῥώπ…" and Ζοσίμου in the same epitaph. One of these names, Ζοσίμος, is attested in Tripolitania and Byzacena along its eastern border, as well as in the west (*cf.* Leynaud 1922; *[Zo]simus* 405; *cf. Zoilus, IRT* 253, 729; Lassère 1977, 405).

This Oean hypogeum contains varied iconography that Romanelli and others have classified as Jewish (Romanelli 1977). Romanelli argued, for this reason, that the partially preserved names from inscriptions within the complex should necessarily be restored in particularly "Jewish" ways. It remains unclear, however, whether the partially preserved Ῥώπ… should *necessarily* be restored as Ῥώπνιος, as Romanelli has supplied (cf. *CIJ* 608). Other local Semitic restorations are also possible (Halff 1963–1964, 142) as are Latinate ones, *e.g., Robustus* (*CIL* 8.11997).

The remainder of the Jewish names from this and other Tripolitanian contexts, however, mostly index pan-Mediterranean Jewish milieus.[103] Some of these, specifically from Tripolitania, include Μοσές (Le Bohec no. 1, Bartoccini 1928–1929, 199, no. 47) and, perhaps, Ἰοσες (Vattioni 1983, 63). Other names appear to transliterate into Greek different Semitic roots, *e.g.,* Μαζαζαυλα (Le Bohec no. 4), and Ἀνα[ν] (Le Bohec no. 6).

Greek and Semitic name formulae and choices in these Tripolitanian inscriptions largely accord with popular uses of Greek and Semitic onomastic systems within Tripolitania. While the scripts and frameworks of these names are more conventional in Tripolitania, the exact choices of their names are not; the few Jewish texts from North Africa appear to index singularly pan-Mediterranean Jewish contexts, rather than local ones. A higher proportion of Tripolitanian inscriptions therefore

[102] Other possibilities exist for the restoration of this name, *cf. CIL* 8.11997, *Robustius*, *IOILT*. Also Halff (1963–4) who states that "RP'-P.-ê. hypochoristique formé avec la racine RP' guérir: 'X.…a guéri' ou p.-ê. le n. pr. Latin Rufus"; and to these compare Février (1953, 465, no. 2566).

[103] For discussion of cultural implications of the name "Moses," see Derda (1997, 257).

reflect pan-Mediterranean Jewish name choices than do those Jewish inscriptions from the west.

V. Trans-Provincial Onomastic Trends in North Africa

This chapter has examined Jewish names particularly within their temporal regional and contexts. Is it possible to identify broader trends in African Jewish naming practices according to region or time? Examination of directions of naming from North African parents to their children might illuminate broader trends in Jewish populations' uses of names as indices of cultural identity. The number of inscriptions that preserve names of both parents and children are few, but they remain suggestive of some directions of intergenerational naming among Jewish populations in North Africa.

A. *Jewish Trends in Naming*

One example of diachronic naming derives from an epitaph from the region of Volubilis in modern Morocco. It is the most extensive extant inscription in Hebrew script from Roman North Africa, and it reads: מטרונא בת רבי יהודה נח ("Matrona, daughter of Rabbi Yehuda, *rest*?"; Le Bohec no. 80; Hirschberg 1974, 52). The text probably dates to the fourth or fifth centuries, C.E. In this case, both father and daughter bear names that unambiguously index diverging cultural contexts. Rabbi Yehuda's name certainly indexes pan-Mediterranean Jewish contexts, while Matrona's Latin name is common in North Africa and elsewhere in the western provinces. The direction of naming is clear in this text: the idiosyncratically named Rabbi Yehuda chose to accord his daughter a thoroughly Latinate name (Le Bohec 80).[104] The mean-

[104] Matrona is a personal name commonly allocated in North Africa. Among others, see examples of *CIL* 8 (8011; 5860; 6065; 6772; 10765). In a similar manner, a parent with a more idiosyncratic name, called his child a more common Greek one: Ἀγάπις υἱος Ἀννιανοῦ ΝευΘηνοῦ—this Greek name is common in North Africa, among Christian communities, as well as in other areas of the Greek speaking world (Le Bohec 25; *cf.* Kajanto 1963, 60; 90; 91; 111; 116; 118). Texts from the Tripolitanian east indicate similar patterns: the idiosyncratically named Ῥωπ…, who possibly possesses a more locally unsual name names his son Ζοσίμος. This Greek name is common within North African Greek and Latin commemorative inscriptions from rural areas such as Morsott

ing of the title of *rabbi* is unfortunately opaque, but the man's decision to give his daughter a conventional Roman African name remains a definitive choice.[105]

Such epigraphic examples of diachronic naming, however, remain rare. Throughout North Africa it becomes increasingly difficult to track naming tendencies diachronically because later epitaphs omit the names of dedicants and exclude the mention of patronymics.[106] The absence of Jewish onomastic idiosyncrasies in most later texts from Africa Proconsularis and the preference for conventional single names in later periods might indicate that Jews might have preferred more locally conventional names for their progeny through time. [107]

B. *Broader North African Patterns of Naming*

How do these apparent tendencies in Jewish naming compare to those in Africa's broader population? Among the heterogeneous cultural environments of North Africa, other minority populations also appear to have increasingly emulated conventional Roman African and Christian African onomastic practices.[108]

A selection of earlier votive texts from Maktar that list the names of parents and their children explicitly demonstrates such tendencies toward onomastic homogenization. These Punic texts that adorned a "temple neo punique" (*MHT* I, 129), list one *Rufus*, the son of *Mastibor*, and another *Rufus*, the son of a *Ba'alyaton* (*MAT* I, 129–131, col. V, VII).

(*cf.* Lassère 1977, 339, 340) and in cities of Libyphoenician descent (Lassère 1977, 455, no 40; Thompson, 1969, 150–151) such as Sicca Veneria (Lassère 1977, 549), as well as in areas such as Oppidum Novum in Mauretania Tingitana (Lassère 1977, 405).

[105] For discussion of the complexity of interpreting the word "rabbi" in epigraphic contexts, see Cohen (1981).

[106] The Jews who mark their deceased as different with the adjective *Iudaeus* or who give them idiosyncratic personal names such as *Iudas*, appear to have done so in earlier periods or without attribution of the epitaphs' personal names dedicant.

[107] Attempts to determine directions of naming and related cultural values are countered by diminished onomastic evidence for such an enquiry. For difficulties in the consideration of late ancient naming, see (Ennabli 2000).

[108] To common-sense analysis, it appears probable that subsequent generations name their children according to the customs of a place more than their immigrant forebears. One cannot assume, however, that this is always the case. Though this argument appears sensible, it is still speculative—an argument *ex silencio* based on contemporary assumptions about immigration cannot sufficiently explain directions of naming in North African context.

In the same set of texts, a *Rogatus* is described as the son of *Azarmân* and one *Calcanius* is described as the son of *Metziklat*, (Col. VI). This pattern remains common not only in Semitic Punic texts, but also in Greek ones.[109] Even names preserved in Greek scripts often demonstrate regional preferences for Roman African *sounding* names. Epitaphs throughout North Africa indicate that individuals of African, Punic and Greek contexts who bear idiosyncratic names frequently prefer to allocate conventional Roman African names to their children.[110] Jews, just like other cultural minorities and some exogenous populations in North Africa, appear to index the cultural identities of their children in comparably Latinate ways.[111]

VI. Conclusion

Previous studies have interpreted the relationship between the onomastic and the cultural situations of Jews in Roman North Africa (Le Bohec 1981b, 209–229; Hirschberg 1974, 1–72). Different approaches to the examination of Jewish names and their constituent parts, however, yield very different conclusions about North African Jews' cultural identities. In their evaluations of North African Jewish names, Hirschberg and Le Bohec anticipate the discovery of idiosyncratic "Jewish" names on inscriptions and express surprise at Jewish adoption of conventional North African names. For Le Bohec in particular, the similarity between

[109] For greater details and more complete discussion of the names used and their correlation to ethnic groups and places, see (Lassère 1977, 404, 405).

[110] Immigrants of eastern origin are of course commemorated with the names they were given elsewhere (*cf. Bardo*, no. 9). As the dating of Greek inscriptions and expressions of filiation are so unsure, it is difficult to determine whether Greek-speaking immigrants continued to bestow on their children names from their lands of origin. It does appear, however, that those commemorated with names that were in Greek script and included toponymic and geographic references, as well as Greek patterns of filiation, were of foreign, and mostly eastern, origin. Most of these inscriptions are dated to earlier periods in the Empire.

[111] One possible counterexample remains the epitaph for *Avilia Aster Iudea* (Le Bohec 74), the daughter of *M. Avilius Ianuarius* in Mauretanian Sitifensis. *Avilia Aster* includes a common North African *cognomen* and *nomen*. The addition of *Iudea* to her name might indicate the later incorporation of an ethnic element into the name itself (see Kraemer). Alternatively, it could be an adjective applied to the name in later commemoration. See earlier discussion. Although the previous example might suggest a later trend in "Judaizing" the name of the deceased, the majority of these texts indicate that parents were willing to provide their children with names that were less idiosyncratic and regionally conventional in the North African territories.

Jewish and non-Jewish North African names is problematic and requires explanation. His discussions of onomastic practices and of the related processes of "*Latinisation*" reflect this understanding:

> Il y a d'ailleurs plus délicat, le cas des noms typiquement africains énumerés plus haut, et dont la présence peut être interprétée de deux manières radicalement différentes: ou il y a eu simple influence du milieu païen, les Juifs choisissant des noms à la mode, ou il s'agit d'Africains convertis au judaïsme. Il est impossible de trancher; il faut néanmoins admettre que les influences païens sont difficiles à mettre en évidence avec certitude.
>
> (Le Bohec 1981b, 228)

For Le Bohec, Jews' exhibitions of typically African names are problematic because they demonstrate the confounding of impermeable categories. He offers two principal explanations to account for this tendency: (1) Jews might fall under the influence of their pagan milieu; or (2) "North African" names in Jewish contexts accompanied by Jewish symbols might be explained by conversion—even after they converted to Judaism, such Africans would have retained their original names. But why are these the only possible interpretations of the comparability of names in North African and explicitly Jewish North African contexts? Are all onomastic similarities among Jews, pagans, and Christians to be understood as resulting from the corruption or rupturing of categories?

A different approach to culture—and to the names that index it—furnishes different lines of inquiry to interpret the same evidence. Viewing Jewish practices of naming as *comparable* to those of neighboring groups—whether of Latin-speaking Italic Africans, Punico-Africans, and exogenous Egyptians, Syrians, or Greeks—permits a more nuanced analysis of their onomastic practices. The categorical problems in the onomastic record identified by Le Bohec, then, are replaced as cultural probabilities. According to this evaluation, Jewish naming practices exemplify features of Jewish populations' situatedness in their local environments. Jews' allocations of regionally conventional names reflects their embeddedness in the periods and regions that they inhabited North Africa; resemblances between Jews' names and those of their neighbors are only to be anticipated.

This perspective facilitates more nuanced understandings of ranges of Jewish onomastic practices. In most cases, local onomastic tendencies predict name structure and choice: in earlier periods, many Jewish names emulated Roman onomastic forms and in later periods, they emulated trends in names' simplifications. In Latin-speaking areas,

most Jews assigned Latin names, while in Greek-speaking areas, most assigned Greek-sounding names popular in the region. Jewish onomastic practices differed according to time and region, but their patterns remained similar: they largely emulated the naming practices of the areas they inhabited.

In other cases, exceptions emerge: certain epitaphs attest to Jews' attributions of personal names that differently index local naming practices. In such instances, Jews might have conferred names on children that accorded with Greek or Semitic name formulae and choices that were more unusual within Latin-speaking areas. Likewise, they might have combined distinct naming systems by inserting names with Semitic roots into a Latin naming structure, or have used a Greek onomastic structure to frame a Punic personal name. A contextual examination of these combined names and frameworks, however, reveals that in most cases, Jews' simultaneous uses of Latin, Greek, and Semitic naming practices largely accord with those of other populations in similar regions of the African provinces. Even in the cases where definitive markers such as *Iudaeus* are affixed to a name, the marker appears to be applied upon a person's death. In life, the same *Iudaeus* may have borne a name entirely indistinguishable from those of his non-Jewish neighbors.

Broader trends in Jewish naming also accord with onomastic trends of North African minority populations generally. Just as the idiosyncratic onomastic practices of other minority populations decrease throughout the generations, so too do Jews': non-Jewish and Jewish exogenes and their children are most likely to bear idiosyncratic or toponymic names, while subsequent generations fully embrace the naming styles of their local environments.[112] North African Jews increasingly favored common North African names over idiosyncratic or particularly "Jewish" ones. At times, Jews chose names that entirely emulated those popular in North Africa, and at other times, they manipulated conventional onomastic forms in distinguishing ways. In the vast majority of cases, however, onomastics serve as a cultural tool for North African Jews; names label the relationship of a parent or commemorator to the North African culture that she inhabited.

[112] Comparisons in *MHT* I, 129 and also in Février and Fantar (1963–1964).

CHAPTER FOUR

INSCRIBING THE DEAD TO DESCRIBE THE LIVING: READING JEWISH IDENTITY THROUGH FUNERARY LANGUAGE

Figure 1. Epitaph dedicated to *Abedeunis*, Bardo Museum, Tunisia
Photo: Author

Over one hundred years ago, French soldiers discovered this epitaph when they accidentally exposed an ancient necropolis in Thina,[1] outside

[1] Le Bohec 1981a, no. 7; *CIL* 8.10475, 22646; Gauckler (1928, 103, no. 1237); Ben Abdallah (1986, no. 158).

the modern Tunisian city of Sfax (Figure 1).[2] The inscription reads: *Memoria Abedeunis bixit anos VII.* שלום לה. Though the epitaph initially appears simple, it betrays a complex series of cultural referents. A Latin funerary formula, *memoria*, which is most commonly used in early Christian epitaphs in North Africa, is recorded in a Latin script. The name of the deceased derives from two distinct naming systems: *Abedo* is a conventional name for North African males of Punic descent, while this name, *Abedeunis*, demonstrates a method of recording filiation that is customary in Greek language inscriptions throughout the Mediterranean.[3] The bottom portion of the text uses a Semitic script to record a Hebrew phrase, "שלום לה" or "peace to him/her."[4] Finally, two menorot, Jewish symbols, are incised at the bottom of the inscription.

Traditionally, scholars have drawn attention to only two of the text's features: its depiction of two menorot and its use of Hebrew.[5] These attributes of the inscription have led scholars to classify it as one of a group of texts with clear displays of "Jewishness." As the Jewish classification of the stone has been considered sufficient to describe it, the possible significance of its conflation of diverse scripts, names, and languages has been overlooked (Ben Abdallah 1986, 72; Le Bohec no. 7). Could attention to these additional aspects of the epigraphic field contribute to a more meaningful analysis of the stone than previous perspectives have provided? After all, why ought the discussion of the

[2] The French soldiers had been digging the earth outside Sfax for a military installation when they uncovered a necropolis and this text beneath. The area of the necropolis is presently cut off from Sfax by a series of highways in a small nature preserve. This inscription remains in the archives of the Bardo Museum in Tunis (Ben Abdallah 1986, no. 158). The stone displays at least three major inconsistencies of orthography: the spellings of (1) Abedeunis, (2) "vixit," and (3) unclear renderings in the Hebrew script.

[3] An error is preserved in Ben Abdallah's transcription of the Hebrew text to read שלום לה Other instances of this Punic name occur in the nominative; an Abedo is commorated on a stele which Delattre attributes to the "Punic époque" (Delattre 1889, 5–6). Jongeling argues for a different reading of the word based on the improbability of *Abedeunis* being female, as is implied by the Hebrew suffix (לה) in his treatment (1984). For additional discussion, see previous chapter and my forthcoming article (Stern 2007).

[4] While the orthography of the word implies that the deceased is female, the scribe's full knowledge of Hebrew is suspect. For this reason I maintain that the gender of the deceased is ambiguous. In addition, the vocal pattern of the inscription (the use of the initial "B" instead of "V," "bicsit" = vixit) and the funerary formula (inclusion of age at death) remain conventional for Latin epitaphs throughout North Africa, see Aurigemma (1957, index).

[5] See examples in Le Bohec (1981a, 174) and Merlin (1919, cciv–ccv).

inscription's cultural context relate only to its use of Hebrew letters and carved menorot? I suggest that these other of the epitaph's linguistic idiosyncrasies are also important to explore. A more careful examination of the stele's languages, scripts, and formulae and a comparison of them to those within similar North African commemorative texts facilitate a different and more useful interpretation of such language use.

In this chapter, I suggest that attention to language and script patterns in Jewish epitaphs permits more precise understandings of Jewish cultural identities in Roman North Africa. North African Jewish commemorative inscriptions often vary in their uses of language: some Jewish inscriptions singularly exhibit locally normative language practices, while other Jewish inscriptions demonstrate completely distinct patterns of epigraphic language use. Still other epitaphs partly incorporate locally normative practices, but do so in erratic ways. In this chapter, I argue that each of these three linguistic patterns serves as a strategy that corresponds to the cultural identities of the inscriptions' commisioners; North African Jews manipulated elements within commemorative language in complex and varied ways to index complex and varied identities. Contextual evaluations of language patterns in North African Jewish inscriptions, furthermore, yield an additional argument—that certain North African Jewish inscriptions exhibit particularly *North African Jewish* patterns of language use that distinguish both from local North African linguistic practices and from those of Jews from other regions. Attention to the local contexts of commemorative epigraphy and the dissection of its constituent parts facilitates this study of North African Jewish language practice.

Epitaphs furnish a particularly useful means to investigate both Jewish language practices and Jewish cultural identities. The function of commemorative texts, after all, is not limited to the act of recording the name of the deceased (Bodel 2000, 2). The phrases, epithets, languages, and scripts employed on an epitaph also serve as deliberate and public displays of the status, patriline, education, and values of that individual. Through each of these aspects, commemorative language operates as an encoded system—the subtlest of its rearrangements, variations, and inflections deliberately convey specific cultural information (Fishman 1999, 152–153). A closer unpacking and analysis of the linguistic patterns within Jewish epitaphs, therefore, offers an opportunity for a more nuanced understanding of how Jews used linguistic tools to describe the identities of the deceased.

That Jews of the ancient Mediterranean used language as a marker of identity is far from a new idea. Scholars of ancient Jewish epigraphy,

furthermore, have generally maintained a list of features that might identify an artifact or an inscription as "Jewish." In addition to the application of Jewish symbols, one of the features considered to be most clearly diagnostic of a Jewish epitaph is its use of Hebrew, or even Greek (Van der Horst 1991, 23–24; Tcherikover 1957, xvii–xx).[6] Frequently, scholars have noted that the limited uses of Hebrew in epitaphs, for example, probably reflected *symbolic* use more than anything else: even Jews who inhabited Roman Palestine in late antiquity spoke Greek, not Hebrew (Schwartz 1995, 26; Van der Horst 1991, 24). The epigraphic presence of Hebrew and its sufficient diagnosis of "Jewishness," however, commonly deter scholars from further analysis of inscriptions' other linguistic features. Editions of Jewish inscriptions frequently notice unusual languages and language patterns in epitaphs, but rarely do scholars more seriously consider possible reasons for the specific arrangement of commemorative language.[7] Such approaches reinforce a sense that in commemorative contexts, Jews either inscribe with the languages they speak on a daily basis to communicate information, or use separate "symbolic" languages for the purpose of explicitly marking Jewish identity.[8] Rarely have more nuanced examinations or explanations for this epigraphic language been sought.[9]

I. Methodology

In this chapter, I propose a bipartite method to facilitate a more precise analysis of Jewish language practices in North Africa. First, I draw attention to the particularities of the North African linguistic climates in which Jewish populations participated. Spoken and epigraphic

[6] Throughout the Mediterranean, use of Hebrew is often limited to phrases such as "shalom," but Greek is used more extensively (Van der Horst 1991, 36–37).

[7] In most cases, this is due to the fact that such inscriptions are part of larger corpora whose editors' objectives are to collect, dissect, and organize data; thorough analyses of all aspects of these texts are impossible in such contexts. Certain scholars, such as David Noy, provide more synthetic analyses at the outset of such collections (1993; 1995). Also see discussion in Noy (1997).

[8] I do not intend to distinguish between *degrees* of functionality, but between *types* of functionality within language.

[9] Studies by Lapin (1999) and Schwartz (1995) are notable exceptions to this tendency. Both of these emphasize language use in Palestine and thoroughly examine the relationships between socio-political history and the polemical aspects of epigraphic language use.

languages shifted throughout time and place in North Africa and Jewish inscriptions from the region require evaluation according to these specific patterns. Second, I adopt an approach that permits the dissection of signs within these language patterns. The components that comprise epigraphic language are multiple and include an inscription's language, script, formula, and context. Each of these may serve as individual markers, or signs, whose cultural values are context-dependent. Discernment of the linguistic signs that index "normalcy" for North Africans in a given time and place creates a type of linguistic yardstick: the conventionality or alterity of inscriptions' language signs requires assessment according to those contemporaneous standards.

A contextual review of Jewish language signs, then, becomes the piece that enables the creation of a cultural map for them. To derive meaning from a discussion of language, one must adopt the approach of a linguistic archaeologist. Just as an exquisite artifact is rendered useless if it is discovered outside of its stratigraphic context, so too is it meaningless to discuss Jewish inscriptions outside of their precise linguistic context. Analyses of word and symbol patterns are interesting, but useless, unless their cultural meanings are approximated. To understand how Jewish populations used language to index cultural signs for self-identification, scholars must first possess a specific sense of how others within their cultural contexts attached meaning to language use (Mytum 1999, 210). Close comparisons of Jewish inscriptions with those of other North African populations permit a more exact understanding of how North African Jews might have employed funerary language and its components as a cultural index, by which they could identify themselves as distinct from and/or similar to neighboring North African and pan-Mediterranean Jewish populations.[10]

[10] For additional discussions of the complexity of language use, see Schwartz (1995; 2001). Schwartz has cautioned that, "we should not take for granted a simple relationship between language and national identity, and that imperial domination had complex and varied effects on the symbolic worlds, on the self-definition, of the ruled" (1995, 45). His emphasis on the deliberate and political decisions involved in language choice and use can be instructive here. Few have begun to approach the ancient material in similar ways, though Jewish use of language is instructive for an understanding of individual and group identities, as well as to determine how Jews attempted to circumscribe their relationships to the cultures around them. Schwartz and other scholars of Judaism in antiquity who have begun to note the possibilities of interpreting multiple language use in inscriptions, *e.g.*, Lapin (1999), have also drawn attention to the importance of noticing relationships between regional and Jewish naming practices and identity in inscriptions.

An alternative approach could be taken to these texts whereby patterns in African Jewish language use might be explained primarily through comparison with inscriptions of Jews from elsewhere in the Mediterranean.[11] Though regionally peculiar tendencies in North African Jewish texts may be explained through such pan-Mediterranean comparisons, the premature embrace of this approach ignores the contingencies of life in the ancient world and the extent to which North African Jews may have demonstrated locally conventional linguistic traits as well as regionally idiosyncratic ones. My desire *not* to presume exclusiveness or difference in North African Jewish inscriptions underlies this approach. The conventional and locally unusual features of Jewish inscriptions can only be discerned by considering their immediate and broader epigraphic contexts.

A. *Language Practices in Roman North Africa*

Practical as well as ideological factors equally informed the processes of language and script choice within all commemorative inscriptions from Roman North Africa. North Africa's linguistic situation, after all, differed strikingly from that within other Mediterranean regions.[12] As described in chapter two, the mix of languages, dialects, and scripts employed throughout the region related to North Africa's varied history of internal migration, colonization, and Empire.

Regional languages and dialects used by indigenous and local Punic populations persisted throughout North Africa, but remain particularly well documented in the east, in Tripolitania. Indigenous African groups and Libyan tribes may have sustained their dialects through the Middle Ages,[13] while Libyphoenicians and Punic descendants of Phoenician

[11] This approach to Jewish epigraphic materials deviates from traditional methods of their exploration among scholars of Judaism in antiquity. Conventional approaches to examining Jewish inscriptions from the diaspora frequently presume an inherent similarity of quality, intention, and practice among those who commissioned the texts. For such reasons, North African materials have frequently been grouped with the study of evidence from other late ancient diaspora populations from Rome, or other areas of Western Europe.

[12] Most spoken local languages and dialects remain largely undocumented. Some of these may have been strictly spoken languages, or may only have been engraved in ephemeral media, but they are only described (not used) in literary sources (Millar 1968, 127; Brown 1968, 85).

[13] The latest evidence for the use of these languages derives from the literary attestations of Augustine (*Ep.* 209.3, CSEL 57, 348) and Procopius (*Bell. Vand.* II.10). The

traders inscribed commemorative inscriptions in Punic dialects and Neo-Punic scripts through the second century C.E. Throughout antiquity, the burgeoning presence in North Africa of Greek-speaking exogenous traders and slaves in Punic *emporia* and western trade centers assured the popularity of Greek inscriptions in Tripolitania and specific cities in the west.[14]

Rome's presence quickly complicated the already varied linguistic climate in North Africa. One effect was the surprisingly rapid adoption of the Latin language throughout the region; Latin dialects and script quickly grew to dominate linguistic and epigraphic practices in western Africa for over six hundred years.[15] Strong links emerged, furthermore, between the adoption of the Latin language and the epigraphic medium of its use. Rome's introduction of the "epigraphic habit," moreover, was also linked to the use of additional languages and scripts: Roman administrative dominance of Africa had also facilitated the migration of soldiers, traders, and slaves from throughout the empire, who had carried with them their own language practices. Roman soldiers of Syrian origin, for example, who were stationed in Africa along the Roman *limes*, exemplified the use of both Latin and Semitic languages on their epitaphs. While Rome had principally imported the Latin language to the region, it had also facilitated the migration and redistribution of exogenous Greek-, Semitic-, and Hamitic-speaking populations to Africa's frontiers and trade centers. By the second and third centuries C.E., therefore, the wide-scale predominance of Latin epigraphy, combined with the maintenance of indigenous and exogenous writing practices,

linguistic environment within North Africa has been frequently debated (Brown 1968, 85–95; Millar 1968,1289–129; Camps 1986; Février 1968; Noël 1988; Simon 1946). Some suggest that modern Berber dialects result from the varied linguistic environment of ancient North Africa (Hanouz 1971).

[14] Also see Fentress and Brett (1996). The lack of Greek use in the western provinces differed sharply from normative language patterns in the northern and eastern Mediterranean, where Alexander's influence had assured the dominance of the Greek language and scripts. In the western provinces, however, the use of Semitic scripts varied according to population. For a discussion of the Semitic linguistic and onomastic practices of Roman soldiers of Syrian origin, see Le Bohec (1987).

[15] The evidence for this is epigraphic. Particularly strong links between the practices of epigraphy and the use of Latin for that purpose indicate that the phenomena of epigraphy and language adoption were intertwined. Proliferation of inscriptions in Roman administrative and military contexts, furthermore, constitutes the majority of available data (Woolf 1996, 30–36).

forged a linguistic climate in North Africa that was as ecclectic as that within other western imperial provinces.[16]

By late antiquity, the majority of North African populations that engraved commemorative inscriptions had already adopted the Latin language, scripts, and phrase conventions. The linguistic variations that preceded and accompanied Latin's introduction, however, did not disappear entirely from the epigraphic record: in some cases, even Latin texts' inclusions of irregular orthography, idiosyncratic word patterns, and distinct name systems in inscriptions might signify vestiges of formerly inscribed languages, scripts, and dialects.[17] In later periods, irregularities of vulgar Latin combined with the regionally erratic renderings of the language to assure Latin's definitively "un-Classical" epigraphic and linguistic forms by the sixth century C.E. The complexity of local language practices shaped North Africans' uses of the epigraphic medium.

Jewish populations in North Africa also employed the variable epigraphic practices of their diverse polyglossic environments. Inconsistent language use in Jewish epitaphs, after all, reflects Jewish populations' relationships to the demographic, cultural, and epigraphic fluctua-

[16] The recent works of Woolf (1995, 1996), Whittaker (1994), and Meyer (1990) examine epigraphic language to investigate increasingly complex understandings of "Romanization" in the Mediterranean (Cooley 2002, 11). Harris's study, *Ancient Literacy*, addresses briefly the relationship between bilingualism and indications of literacy among minority groups in the Roman Empire (Harris 1989, 113).

[17] For years, language has been used as a vehicle to explore issues of identity in the ancient Mediterranean. In North Africa specifically, epigraphists of Greek, Latin, Punic, and Libyan have used bilingualism in inscriptions to investigate the actual dialects spoken in a region, or the accent that local inhabitants may have used to speak a second language, such as Latin (MacMullen 1966, 1–17; Adams 1994; Parca 2000). Analyses of the bilingual Libyan and Latin texts of the Bu Njem garrison in Tripolitania exemplify this approach. For discussions of this material, see Adams (1990); Rebuffat (1989); Mattingly (1987); Parca (2000). Most of the texts from the Roman garrison of Bu Njem, at the Libyan *limes,* were painted onto the surfaces of ostraca. Metrical texts were found alongside these ostraca; epigraphists such as Adams have investigated the correlations between metrical qualities of the verses and possible Libyan-Latin speech patterns. Such studies heavily emphasize connections between language patterns and orthography to determine the glossic qualities and Latin language proficiency of the population (1999). Scholars' objectives, frequently, are to attempt to determine whether Latin was actually spoken by those in the military garrisons, and if so, by whom, and in what percentage. They seek to determine the dialects of the area and whether the orthography belies an indigenous "Libyan" way of pronouncing Latin words and nomenclature (Adams 1990). For different comparative approaches to language, also see MacMullen (1966, 1–17).

tions throughout Roman North Africa.[18] Historical and circumstantial contingencies of this North African environment shaped the *habitus* of Jewish language use—those of its aspects that circumscribed conventional local language practices.[19] Interpretation of this *habitus* relies on the examination of epigraphic templates for language use throughout North Africa.

Important to this analysis is the simultaneous consideration of how epigraphic language reflects habitual constraint and deliberate innovation. As outlined in the introduction, I do not presuppose that the "intentionality" of ancient actors is obvious or unbridled. Creative uses of language are possible—the epigraphic record exemplifies this. Yet individuals probably experienced some sense of constraint in their commission of an epitaph; an inscription had to adhere to minimal standards to ensure that it could be understood by its viewer. A closer review of language use expands understandings of the flexibility of ancient language and of its possibilities to serve as a comprehensible medium for the expression of cultural identity.[20]

B. *Defining language and its parts*

Modified vocabulary of theories of sociolinguistics, bilingualism, and semiotics additionally assists efforts toward more exact interpretations of epigraphic language use among Jewish and non-Jewish populations in North Africa.[21] From these studies I derive my terminology to describe language, its patterns, and its components: I describe patterns of single,

[18] The meanings of language signs shift throughout the region. For example, the use of Greek is a sign of difference in Proconsularis, while it is a sign of epigraphic convention among non-imperial epitaphs from Rome (*cf.* Noy 2000). An interpretation of the indexicals within these texts depends on the realities of the local (rather than foreign) environments Jews inhabit.

[19] For a more thorough discussion of this issue, see the introduction to onomastics in chapter one.

[20] Such a consideration is feasible: if an epitaph mostly exhibits conventions of North African Latin language and its scripts, either the inscriber's choice, or the possible existence of an additional *habitus*, might drive his supplementation of the Latin text with an idiosyncratic element, such as a transliteration of a Greek word in Latin script or the transcription of a Hebrew word in a Hebrew script.

[21] Much of the scholarship in these fields cannot apply to the study of ancient inscriptions, as it depends upon interpretation of spoken and non-commemorative language, dialects, and accent (Bell 1997, 1–27). Nonetheless, the vocabulary these field employs remain instructive here to improve upon terminologies available within ancient studies.

double, and multiple language use on a broader scale as "monoglossia," "diglossia," and "polyglossia," while I describe those patterns in individual instances as correspondingly "monolingual," "bilingual," and "multilingual" (Fishman 1999, 156).[22] Semiotic terminologies and their emphases on the context-dependence of language's meaning and its ability to "index," or "reference" cultural components, and to the ability of language's constituent parts to function as "signs" with cultural values shape this approach.[23]

From additional studies I derive perspectives on language's capacity to reflect and shape individual and group identities. Historical linguists' and sociolinguists' attentions to the significance of repetition and targeted word patterns in texts demonstrate the advantages of attempts to unwind language's parts. So too, do specific analyses that connect understandings of the "valorization" of language with the constructions of identity and ethnicity (Wright 1998; Rothwell 1999; McHoul 1996, 137; Hamers and Blanc 2000, 110–133, 198–239; Haarman 1999, 61).[24] Studies of how social networks affect individuals' language behavior raise possibilities about the dialogical aspects of language use and identity (Agar 1994).[25]

Most of these theoretical approaches were originally developed to address *spoken* languages and are accordingly entrenched in assumptions about linguistic and cultural frameworks of modernity. The questions

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[22] It is important to note here, however, as does Fishman, that "the relationship between *individual* bilingualism and *societal* diglossia is far from being a necessary or causal one, i.e. either phenomenon can occur with or without the other" (Fishman 1989, 181). Elsewhere, Fishman extensively discusses the apposition, not simply the opposition of different languages, and separates their practices into "variation," "functionality," and "attitudinal functional mismatch" (Fishman 1999, 156). Fishman notes that variation in language use frequently depends on the situation in which the language is being used (1999, 153). All of the texts presently reviewed are funerary, and their language will be examined within that context.

[23] I acknowledge that the term "monoglossic" implies a spoken function, rather than a written one. In employing it I do not intend to imply that there is any direct correlation between the way these texts are written and the way the languages were spoken (if at all). For discussion, see Bodel (2001, 15, 36).

[24] Naomi Quinn and Dorothy Holland discuss the relationship between language use and cultural meaning (1987, 2–8), while Alec McHoul labels this relationship in terms of "indexicality," which "is usually referred to as the context-dependence, or context-sensitivity of any utterance" (1996, 193). McHoul asserts that the "meaning, (that is, the intelligibility) of an utterance is dependent on, or sensitive to, its context, where 'context' is to be heard as the highly local or *in situ* embedding of a stretch of language" (1996, 137).

[25] For more extensive theoretical discussion, see Calhoun (1995, 193–195) and Bourdieu (1990, 30–32, 36; 1993, 78–89).

such perspectives prompt and the vocabularies they offer, however, encourage attention to important patterns of ancient language use and furnish means to label its patterns. After all, ancients, as well as moderns, used epigraphic, commemorative, and spoken languages in relation to their anticipation of audiences' interpretations of them.

C. *Language as an Index of Cultural Identity*

My central interest, accordingly, remains the relationship between Jewish epigraphic language, culture, and identity (Fishman 1999, 154).[26] Just as language can serve as a means of communication, so too can it serve as a framework for self-representation. As socio-linguist Joshua Fishman notes, with respect to language, "Ethnic identity is contextually constructed. Given the common link (N.B. 'link,' not 'equivalence') between language and ethnicity, the saliency of specific language use (where a repertoire of languages or varieties is shared by interlocutors) is also contextually constructed" (1999, 154). Components of language use and grammar retain various meanings in context-specific settings and identical language markers might index distinctly (for Fishman's "ethnicity") in those correspondingly different settings. One of the most challenging aspects of studying ancient (as opposed to modern) language, then, is the difficulty of isolating the referents, or linguistic signs, which convey meaning.

As Fishman notes of language, human identity functions on a spectrum whereby individuals constantly remap themselves in relation to others. Unlike people, however, epitaphs are frozen in time; they represent a "snap-shot" of the cultural situation that produced the commemorative sentiment and name of the deceased (Bodel 2001, 15).[27] Though the practices, affiliations, and beliefs of the deceased (and of the commemorator of the deceased) may have shifted throughout his lifetime, the expression of his commemoration does not. The static, yet complex, nature of funerary inscriptions makes them appropriate ground for cultural deconstruction.

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[26] Recent work in the field of sociolinguistics continues to approach the nuances of spoken languages and ethnic identity (Fishman 1999, 156–159; Huss and Lindgren 1999, 300–317).

[27] Adams alludes to this aspect of funerary inscriptions briefly in his study of bilingualism in the Roman Empire (1993).

While the implementation of these perspectives of language and culture might anticipate the examination of spoken language use in antiquity, this chapter will not take a social historical approach to language use among Jews in Roman North Africa. It will not investigate which languages were actively spoken, or the geographic origins of those who commissioned the inscriptions. It will not explore degrees of "actual" historical language use, or the states of monoglossia, diglossia, or triglossia among ancient Jewish populations (*cf.* Romaine 1995, 7). Neither the extant archaeological evidence, nor the meager literary sources, can provide sufficient amounts of information about the linguistic competence of the deceased or their commemorators to facilitate such an investigation. These factors are related to questions of language practice but I do not intend to use this chapter to postulate answers to questions of this type.[28]

The organization of this chapter, rather, facilitates the contextual interpretation and dissection of North African Jewish epigraphic language practices. First, I isolate regional trends in North African language to establish a general and diachronic framework for conventional language use in North Africa. Second, I compare Jewish epigraphic language use to that within locally conventional frameworks. I initially evaluate the degree to which some Jewish inscriptions entirely employ regional North African linguistic conventions, then address those texts that use language in ways completely different than regional tendency. Last, I extensively evaluate a collection of Jewish inscriptions that combine language signs in more complicated ways than do those in the previous two categories. These epitaphs simultaneously employ language signs that index sameness to and difference from regional linguistic conventions. To elucidate possible patterns among these "composite" Jewish texts, I compare their linguistic irregularities to those apparent within linguistically composite texts of other North African populations. Only if unusual patterns of epigraphic language use in Jewish texts are not similarly exemplified in texts of other North African minority populations, do I look to language patterns in Jewish inscriptions from other areas of the Mediterranean to assist their explanation.[29] This system of language dissection and comparison ultimately yields a clearer

[28] The use of epigraphy for historical interpretation presents a challenge. As John Bodel has recently described, "epitaphs attest to commemorative habits, rather than demographic realities" (Bodel 2001, 36). No direct correlation can be presumed between writing and commemorative practices and spoken language practices.

[29] Fishman provides a useful discussion of "small national languages" (1989, 374).

picture of how North African Jews variously used epigraphic language to index their commensurately varied cultural identities.

II. Conventions of Commemorative Language: Epigraphic Conventions throughout North Africa in the Second to Sixth Centuries C.E.

The Roman North African epigraphic corpus is vast and predominantly Latin—it provides the most extensive collection of Latin language inscriptions outside of Rome. Approximately 60,000 Latin inscriptions from the North African provinces have been attested and most of these texts are commemorative (Bodel 2001, 8).[30] These inscriptions share several common features, the foremost of which is their monoglossic use of Latin language and scripts.[31] Another prominent feature of North African epitaphs is the relative uniformity of their content: despite their period and location, epitaphs usually serve as occasions for linguistic and commemorative conservatism.

Political tectonics and broader legal rulings about Roman citizenship were responsible for the most significant shifts in the phrases and vocabulary considered appropriate within epitaphs in North Africa.[32] For example, just as the grant of citizenship throughout the empire in 212 C.E. had impacted the function and form of Latin names, so

[30] Many of these are contained in the volumes, supplements, and indexes of *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinorum* VIII (= *CIL* 8). Others are well catalogued within regional collections, such as *IRT, ILT, ILA, ILAlg*, and *ILM*.

[31] The preponderance of Latin inscriptions has yielded unfortunately vast discrepancies in language documentation. With the exception of *IRT* (Reynolds 1957), most of the compendia of North African texts generally collect only Latin inscriptions from their respective regions. Punic, Neo-Punic, and Greek texts are occasionally included in these corpora, but the inconsistent nature with which they are included prevents a comprehensive understanding of their distribution and contents.

[32] During the earlier Principate, epitaphs had served as an important vehicle to announce and display the status of citizenship for the deceased and their commemorators (Meyer 1990, 84). Accordingly, earlier Latin texts generally placed greater emphasis on the name and age of the deceased, as well as the name and legal status of the person who commemorated the deceased (Meyer 1990, 84). Elizabeth Meyer describes how early Latin inscriptions, and especially epitaphs, distinguish themselves from prototypical inscriptions in the Greek language and script. Meyer's study emphasizes that a "typical Roman funerary inscription does not simply name the deceased, or even just add to this his or her age and achievements. Instead, the name of the person erecting the inscription, the commemorator, is also added in approximately 80 percent of the sample from the western Roman Empire" (Meyer 1990, 84–104). Meyer and others refer to the data compiled previously by Brent Shaw and Richard Saller (1984).

too did it impact the function and form of the funerary epitaph as a marker of status.[33] After this point, a citizen status of the deceased or his commemorator became unexceptional and no longer merited advertisement through the funerary inscription (Meyer 1990, 85).[34] Some have argued that for related reasons, inscriptions produced in North Africa and elsewhere in the empire decreased in frequency through time and later epitaphs became more abbreviated than those produced in earlier periods (*cf.* Woolf 2001).[35]

A. *Epigraphic Standards of the Second and Third Centuries C.E.*

Despite broader trends in epigraphic practice, specific formulae, languages, and scripts remained remarkably standardized in African pagan epitaphs in the western provinces in the second and third centuries. Most North African epitaphs were inscribed exclusively with stock phrases in the Latin language and with Latin scripts and included the abbreviated dedication of the deceased to the divinized ancestors, *Dis Manibus Sacrum* (*D.M.S.*). The epitaphs also recorded the unique name of the deceased and the year/month/day formula with Roman

[33] This act rendered quotidian those privileges which were once celebrated: once Roman citizenship became commonplace, its privileges became devalued. Assertions of titles and status, for which citizenship made one eligible, accordingly disappeared from epitaphs after the third century. Largely, so too, did the identification of the dedicant of the stone (Meyer 1990). In explaining changes in the Roman impulse for commemoration, Meyer traces datable inscriptions in North Africa and Gaul and concludes that "It is not therefore surprising if in the pre-212 world, when Roman status was desirable and increasingly acquired, the epigraphic habit as a whole can be loosely associated with the numerically predominant epitaphs and their assertions of status and position, or that the curves in general should correlate with the pursuit and display of the one universally acknowledged form of status in antiquity: citizenship" (1990, 94). This rendered certain status markers superfluous and unexceptional; the notation of the dedicant of the epitaph and his/her status slowly began to disappear from the commemorative texts (Meyer 1990, 85). Even the incidence of inscriptions decreases markedly at this point. See also MacMullen (1982).

[34] Inscription no. 19 from the Severan Catacomb in Byzacena exemplifies the patterns that grew superfluous after the expansion of citizenship, as described by Meyer; *Q. PAPIO Q. F. SATVRNINO./IVLIANO. CENTVRIONI./LE.G. II. PART. VIX. ANN. LX./PAPIA. VICTORIA SOROR./PIISIMA FRATRI. SVO./FECIT* (Leynaud 1922, 405)

[35] More current studies correlate commensurately complex linguistic and colonial situations. Postcolonial studies of language are based on more contemporary models, but do correspond to situations comparable to that of Roman colonialism in the ancient world. As Fishman describes, "most forms of colonialism throughout the world (whether under capitalist or communist auspices) are, therefore, also instances of political/territorial diglossia without widespread demographic-indigenous bilingualism" (Fishman 1989, 187).

numerals to express the number of years the deceased lived (*e.g.*, Barrier and Benson 1908, 30).[36] Nearly each of 17 clustered epitaphs from Thina, Byzacena, for example, exemplify each of these patterns, *e.g.*, *DMS GAETULA| VIX· ANN XXV* ("To the gods of the underworld/ Gaetula/Lived 25 years"; Barrier and Benson 1908, 56–57, no. 1) and *DIS MS |VIRINUS | VIXIT ANN | XXXIII* ("To the gods of the underworld/Virinus lived 33 years"; Barrier and Benson 1908, 56–57, no. 7).[37] Occasionally, the dedicant is also mentioned in these standard commemorative dedications.

B. *Epigraphic Standards of the Fourth through Sixth Centuries C.E.*

By the late third century through the Vandal and Byzantine periods, features of Christian inscriptions slowly began to supplant those of Latin "pagan" epigraphy.[38] The vast majority of epitaphs retained the Latin language and script and many Christian epitaphs contained formulae that resembled those of funerary inscriptions of the previous period.[39]

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[36] The necropolis was excavated in 1907, under the directorship of Lieutenants Barrier and Benson of the fourth regiment of the Algerian army of the French territories. Barrier and Benson draw and report a three-part plan of the necropolis (1908, 30–32). The necropolis contained a combination of 51 tombs and 18 mausolea. The extant inscriptions adorned the mausolea themselves, as well as free-standing rectangular stelai, which had been placed within carved niches. Plates, vases, amphorae, and lamps were also found within the grave-goods (Barrier and Benson 1908, 30–40).

[37] Latin text: DMS GAETVLA/VIX · ANN/XXV. Similarly (no. 5) *DMB/Q · AVRELI/VS/RVFINVS/VIXIT/ANNIS · X · L* ("To the gods of the underworld/Quintus Aurelius Rufinus, Lived 40 years"; Barrier and Benson 1908, 56, no. 5).

[38] Christian texts, usually in the forms of epitaphs, occasionally employ different media than do Roman "pagan" texts; Christian epitaphs are often tessellated in mosaics with other symbols and designs, rather than only being engraved in stone (Leynaud 1922, 77).

[39] During the Byzantine period, however, a slight increase in Greek inscriptions probably correlates to an influx of foreign populations and to the new symbolic value of Greek within Byzantine Christianity. Regardless of the language within an inscription, or the presence or lack of additional text, the symbols of alpha and omega consistently accompany the cross and other decorations within North African Christian art and epigraphy. The dissemination of this symbol may relate to the linguistic ramifications of the Byzantines' reconquest of North Africa from the Vandals—many of the soldiers hired and sent to North Africa were from the eastern, Greek-speaking, Byzantine Empire (Cameron 1982). This military action resulted in further demographic, linguistic, and onomastic shifts within North Africa. For discussion, see chapter two. The symbolic integration of Greek within Christian texts becomes more common after the Byzantine invasion. Frequently, related funerary texts are enclosed within *tabula ansata*, and decorated with chi-rho crosses and designs (*cf.* Gauckler, 1928, nos. 39, 41, 48, 51, 56, 64, 66).

Different renderings of information in Christian texts in the later third and early fourth centuries, however, relate to the transformed views of life, death, and afterlife adopted by North African Christian populations. Some inscriptions, for example, add the abbreviation *p.m.*, or *plus/minus, e.g., "vinc[…] |fideli[s.…] p(lus) m(inus)…"* after recording the number of years lived or the date of a person's death to replace definite assertions of a person's age at death with approximations thereof (*e.g.*, *Bardo*, nos. 56, 89, 37; *CIL* 8.11131).[40]

Additional variations within North African commemorative epigraphy relate to broader changes in burial and devotional customs. One of the diagnostic features of North African Christianity was the proliferation of martyr cults and practices of their adoration in the third through sixth centuries. Proclivities to mark martyrs' graves on their epitaphs encouraged the popularity of an additional epigraphic custom—to introduce the name of the deceased with the ligature *memoria*. Many texts that include this dedication (literally: "for the memory/reverence of…") imply that the deceased had died as a martyr (*e.g.*, *CIL* 8.21767, 21768, 21772, 21774).

In later periods of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, an entirely distinct tendency develops to simplify commemorative inscriptions. This pattern of linguistic simplification mirrors the contemporaneous shift toward onomastic simplification identified in the previous chapter. This trend toward commemorative minimalism was adopted in the west as well as in the east: in this period, epitaphs from both the western and eastern African provinces list only the truncated names of the deceased (Bartoccini 1928–1929, nos. 1–50). In conjunction with this trend toward simplification, developed the addition of a new sentiment on epitaphs: during this period, the Latin sentiment *in pace* (in peace) is frequently added to the single name of the deceased, *e.g.*, *IANVARIVS IN PACE* (Ennabli 1993, no. 73).[41]

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[40] One such inscription from Ammaedara (modern Haïdra) reads *Melleus ep(is)c(opu)s un(i)t(a)t(i)s requiebit in p(a)ce; bixit ann(I-o)s pl(us) m(i)n(u)s LXXX, d(e)p(o)s(i)t(u)s s(u)b d(i)e vid(u) Augustas, ind(ictione)* (*Bardo*, no. 37).

[41] Other texts, such as *FORTVNATVS IN PACE ET IVLIANA*, include the spouse's name at the end of the text (Ennabli 1993, no. 10). Different texts from the Christian Bon Pasteur Catacomb, in Hadrumetum (modern Sousse), list only the date of death and the gentilic name of the deceased, without the *in pace* epithet (*VIIII KA(lendas) OCTO(bres) SECVNDINA*; Carbonel 1922, 154, no. 43).

C. *Epigraphic Standards in Tripolitania*

Within Tripolitania, Latin inscriptions follow the same broader conventions as do those in the west.[42] In this eastern region, however, the proportion of Greek to non-Greek inscriptions was much higher than in other western regions in North Africa; this is hardly surprising given the importance of trade with Greek-speaking eastern cities described in the two previous chapters.[43] Most inscriptions that contain Greek are monoglossic and certain tendencies exist among them: earlier Greek formulae, as well as later Christian Greek texts, include various Greek spellings for the formula "here lies" (ἐνθάδε κεῖται) to describe the situation of the deceased. Many texts also include the sentiment for wishing for the deceased to rest in peace (ἐν εἰρήνῃ). These epitaphs include Greek names, toponymics, and, occasionally, quotations from Greek literary texts (Thieling 41). Only rarely do Greek language epitaphs incorporate the age of the deceased, or references to divinized ancestors (*e.g.*, *CIL* 8.11132).[44]

D. *General Strategies of Commemorative Language Use Throughout North Africa*

Patterns in North African epitaphs are consistent enough to establish generalizations about regional strategies of commemorative language use. Appropriate commemoration is conservative: it anticipates the use of one language and its language-appropriate formulae and script to commemorate one person in the same way as his neighbor. For the most part, epitaphs are relatively standardized and bear few linguistic deviations: they use comparable scripts, letters, and orthography in as "proper" a form as the scribe could render. These language frameworks

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[42] Evidence for commemorative use of the Punic language and Neo-Punic script in the region, furthermore, does not postdate the second century (MacMullen 1966), though Greek continued to be used as a commemorative language through the Arab conquest.

[43] The erratic nature of the collections remains a factor in this evaluation. For example, no Greek inscriptions from Morocco are listed in *ILM*. Other collections of Latin inscriptions only occasionally include Greek inscriptions from that region (*CIL* 8, various).

[44] *CIL* 8.11132 reads: ενθάδε κεῖται Ἀππολινάριου Ἀππολινάριος.... The marble epitaph is from Lampta and rendered in a shaky script with Greek translations of the *DMS* sentiment.

appear to have been desirable and strategic: even groups of eastern origin grew to adopt conventional North African Latin languages, scripts, and formulae within commemorative texts. Dominant commemorative languages varied by region: Latin inscriptions remained conventional in the west and Greek texts were proportionally more prevalent in the east. Throughout North Africa, indigenous and exogenous populations, which included slaves, freedmen, soldiers, and traders, were more likely to utilize Greek than some of their neighbors, but they also began to adopt Latin commemorative strategies to the best of their ability.[45] Though the formulae within Latin epitaphs shifted throughout time and place, their conventions were embraced diachronically by North African populations in the east and west. North Africans appear to have desired to display linguistic uniformity in death.[46]

III. Jewish Inscriptions That Index Commemorative Similarity

Jews, like other North Africans, largely preferred to commemorate their deceased with the same language patterns as their neighbors. Of North African Jewish texts, 68 percent employ the linguistic conventions appropriate to their time and region (*e.g.*, Le Bohec nos. 12–15; 76–77; 4–6).[47] Such Jewish epitaphs use the Latin language and scripts and adhere to Latin formulae standard for Latin epitaphs of the second through late third centuries in the west. To even greater proportions (83 percent) they employ monoglossic Greek (language, scripts, and formulae) in their epitaphs in the east (Table I).[48]

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[45] This appears to be the case even if there was little correlation between their primary spoken language and their epigraphic use of Latin (Harris 1989, 20).

[46] Christian texts of late antiquity adapt an amplified range of images and symbolism.

[47] Sometimes only names can provide any indication that an inscription might be "Jewish" as opposed to anything else (Le Bohec 1981b, 126).

[48] The majority of language patterns within these epitaphs also follow those conventional within their time and context. Some of these include more extended texts, such as one found in the area of the Gammarth catacomb near Carthage: *L. Ann(i)* | *Constantis fil(ius),* | *P. Annius* | *Fuscus* | *Musurius* | *vix (it) ann (is) (quindecim)* (Le Bohec no. 39; *cf.* Le Bohec nos. 40, 69, etc.). Such inscriptions include commemorative patterns conventional in earlier North African epitaphs, which use North African Latin names and scripts to identify the name and age of the deceased. My criteria for "Jewish" inscriptions among these permit a significantly smaller percentage of "Semitic" language Jewish texts than Le Bohec attests.

A. *Western Provinces*

In the west, the word patterns and formulae within Jewish texts shift according to broader North African trends in commemoration (Table II, A). In the early principate, some Jews appropriately dedicated their deceased, as did their neighbors, to the *Dis Manibus, e.g., DMS IUDASI COSMU* (Fournet-Pilipenko 1961–1962, no. 150 = Le Bohec no. 12). At times, other Jewish inscriptions followed those of their neighbors to include only the names and ages of the deceased.[49] Still other Jewish epitaphs from Sitifis and Constantine in Numidia, and Volubilis in Mauretania Tingitana used standard Latin patterns to identify the deceased and the dedicant on an epitaph (*e.g.*, Le Bohec nos. 68, 69, 73, 74, 81, *cf.* Meyer 1990, 94). These formulae are occasionally followed by a list of the years (and sometimes months and days) of the length of the life of the deceased, as exemplified by the commemoration of the aged Iulius Anianus in Cirta, who lived 75 years: *vi*(xit) a(*nis*) *LXXV*; (Le Bohec no. 69).[50]

Just as funerary sentiments shifted during the Christian period, so too did those within Jewish inscriptions. At times, Jewish inscriptions terminate with the *plus/minus* ("more or less") formula, in the pattern associated particularly with Christian inscriptions, to describe the length of the deceased's life, *e.g., Furfanius Honoratus Iudeus vix(it) | pl(us) m(inus) E an(nis)* XLV… ("Furfanius Honoratus Iudeus who lived 45 years, more or less…"; Le Bohec no. 76; *cf. Bardo*, no. 37).

Different Jewish epitaphs begin with the Latin word *memoria* followed by the name of the deceased in the possessive case, to indicate that the epitaph is dedicated "in/for the memory of X," *e.g., memoria Abedeunis* (Le Bohec no. 7; Diehl 4960). This pattern is exemplified by many Christian texts from the late third and fourth centuries and may date this Jewish text correspondingly.

Later Jewish epitaphs appear to follow another trend of extreme simplification of commemoration during the Christian period: in these cases the commemorative inscription simply records the names of the

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[49] The number of Latin Jewish texts is much greater than Greek and Semitic ones (Le Bohec 1981b, 226). Le Bohec establishes the ratio of 54:15:32 of Latin to Greek to Semitic texts though I disagree with the numbers from which he derives these statistics and the categories he delineates.

[50] One text reads, *Iulius Ani*|[*n*]*us Iudeus, fi*|[*li*]*us patri suo | karissimo, po*|*suit; v(ixit) an (nis)* (LXXV) (Le Bohec no. 69; CIL 8.7150 = *ILAlg.* V, 826).

Table I. Distribution of language patterns in Jewish North African texts

Language, script, and language combinations	Numbers of inscriptions according to Le Bohec unless otherwise noted	Total number that adhere to pattern
Latin (used for language, script, and formula)	8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 58, 60, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 73, 74, 76,	38
Greek (used for language, script, and formula)	1, 4, 5, 6, 25, 31, 32, 33, 63, 78, Vattioni 1983	11
Hebrew (used for language, script, and formula)	22, 23, 28, 80	4
Latin Transliteration (Latin words rendered in Greek scripts)	26, 27, 61 (?)	3
Greek Transliteration (Greek language rendered in Latin scripts)	20, 25, 51	3
Substantive Transliteration (Latin formulae in Greek script)	79	1
Bilingual (Latin and Greek)	57 (?), 59 (?)	2
Bilingual (Greek and Hebrew)	18	1
Bilingual (Latin and Hebrew)	7	1

deceased, or addresses the deceased directly. Late antique epitaphs from Carthage and Gammarth record dedications for conventional North African names such as *Columba* and *Donata* or directly address the deceased, *e.g.*, *Maxime*! (Le Bohec nos. 47, 49, 52; Figure 3, Chapter 3).[51] Other inscriptions also include formulae to wish that the named deceased rest in peace, *e.g., Macido in pace* (Le Bohec no. 50).

B. *Tripolitania and Eastern Regions*

Most of the Jewish texts from Tripolitania are monoglossic and employ the Greek language and scripts. Such language use accords with local tendencies and paradigms.[52] The five epitaphs from Tripolitania are all in Greek scripts and record conventional Greek onomastic formulae (*e.g.*, Le Bohec nos. 4, 5, 6).[53] In both east and west, therefore, language patterns within Jewish texts generally correspond with regional language distribution (Table II, B).

IV. Flouting Convention: Indexing Alterity through Language of Complete Difference

Though many North African Jewish texts employ standard Latin commemorative language, scripts, and phrases in the west, and Greek in Greek-speaking areas in the east, a limited number of Jewish texts deviate entirely from the linguistic tendencies of their respective regions.[54] At times, Jews, just like some other North African cultural

[51] Examples of this occur as far east as in Macomades, modern Sirta, Tripolitania, where one text simply reads Μοσες! (Le Bohec no. 1; Bartoccini 1928–1929, no. 48). Related onomastic trends are discussed more thoroughly in the preceding chapter.

[52] This text is equivalent to Le Bohec no. 5. Also see Le Bohec nos. 4, 6. Among these Tripolitanian inscriptions, Jewish texts are more typical in their use of Greek language and script. One epitaph from a Jewish hypogeum in Oea, which reads Ὠ[δε] κίτ(αι) Ῥώπ(νιος) τῷ υἱῷ Ζοσίμου νωυτ.υ…; "here lies Reb[nios]. For his son, son of Zosimus (made this)" exemplifies the same language use and textual content as that found typically within other Greek epitaphs from the region (cf. Aurigemma 1932, 137). This text uses the typical "here lies" formula.

[53] Lack of comparison prevents the possibility of our knowing how Jewish language use might have varied throughout the region.

[54] Greek inscriptions in Africa Proconsularis and the western provinces are rarer, and the majority of Jewish Greek texts from this area tend to be shorter than those in Tripolitania. In accordance with tendency during later periods, these texts contain

Table II. Proportions of language patterns among Jewish North African Inscriptions

Language Pattern	Total number of inscriptions that adhere to pattern	Percentage of total Jewish inscriptions with language patterns that adhere to (rows A & B) and differ from (rows C & D) local language patterns
A. Monolingual dominant (Latin in the west)	38	56%
B. Monolingual dominant (Greek in the east)	5	83%
C. Monolingual regionally idiosyncratic (monolingual Greek or monolingual Hebrew)	10	23%
D. Bilingual (multilingual or monolingual with discrepant cultural formulae)	11	17%

minorities, use languages, formulae, and/or scripts in their epitaphs, which remain completely distinct from those conventional within their local environments (Table II, C). Twenty-three percent of all North African Jewish texts from the west correspond with this pattern. The exact percentage of non-Latin epitaphs within the entire North African

only names and well wishes for the deceased. The brief epitaph in Greek script which reads, Σαλωνεῖνα εὐλογημένη ("Salonina, bless you!"; *cf.* Le Bohec nos. 30, 31, 32) and the dedication to Ἀ[σι]ατικὸς Μ[α]ρίνος (υἱεὸς) Τ[ι]βερεύς (Le Bohec no. 28) demonstrate this pattern (*cf.* Le Bohec no. 26, 29, 30, 31, 32).

corpus is uncertain but comparatively miniscule; patterns of unusual monolingualism are proportionally more significant within the North African Jewish corpus than within the non-Jewish one.[55]

A. *Greek*

Ten Jewish epitaphs, for example, exclusively employ Greek commemorative language, scripts, and formulae, but were discovered in areas where the use of Greek was more unusual in Proconsularis and Mauretania Tingitana (Le Bohec nos. 25–32, 78, 79). Some of these texts are limited to the transcription of Greek names *e.g.*, Ἀ[σι]ατικος Μ[α]ρίνος (υἱεὸς) Τ[ι]ιβερεύς (Le Bohec no. 28), while others render both names and well-wishes in Greek language, scripts, and formulae, *e.g.*, Σαλωνεῖνα εὐλογημένη! ("Salonina, bless you!" Le Bohec no. 31, cf. Le Bohec nos. 30, 32). Some of these epitaphs also grant wishes "in peace" for the deceased in Greek, *e.g.*, ἐν εἰρήνῃ (Le Bohec no. 18).

B. *Hebrew*

Though no Jewish texts have been definitively identified as employing local Semitic languages such as Punic, some texts are rendered entirely in the Hebrew language and script.[56] The most extensive example

[55] It remains unclear what percentage of the corpus these texts occupy: the quest for a fair analysis of language distribution in the North African provinces continues to remain an elusive one. One practical challenge to approaching these non-Latin, and non-Christian North African inscriptions is their obscurity—scholars have rarely published these. Collections of Latin inscriptions from Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco may occasionally include non-Latin texts, and may or may not include Semitic (including Aramaic, Palmyrene, Neo-Punic, Punic, and Libyan), or Greek scripts. The lack of coordination of these resources, and disparate nature of the publications of these texts impede a more exact understanding of epigraphic language distribution in Africa. Dain (1936) provides one of the only examples of such reproductions of Greek texts. Paul Monceaux (1902; 1904) also has specifically published Greek language stamps and seals. Walter Thieling's *Der Hellenismus in Kleinafrika* is outdated, as it was initially compiled in 1927, but remains the most extensive study of the Greek inscriptions (1927; 1964). The Semitic inscriptions are published by language, and collected in *CIS* and *KAI*. Additional publications of Neo-Punic, Libyan, Aramaic, or Greek texts derive from collections of particular museums or archaeological sites, while *IRT, CIG*, and *SEG* and *BE* collect texts which have been discovered subsequently.

[56] Exceptions may include Le Bohec nos. 61 and 62. These texts are quite jumbled and appear similar to other Neo-Punic scripts, which are only remotely legible.

Figure 2. Epitaph of Matrona daughter of Rabbi Yehudah, Volubilis, Morocco
Sketch: Berger 1892, 62

of a Jewish epitaph in Semitic Hebrew script derives from Volubilis in Mauretania Tingitana (Figure 2). This text uses Hebrew script to record the epitaph for מטרונה בת רבי יהודה נת ("Matrona, daughter of Rabbi Yehuda *rest*") (Le Bohec no. 80).[57] The formula employed is not necessarily distinct from Greek funerary sentiments of the period, but this more extended use of a locally unusual language and script is unconventional in this region of North Africa.

The other extant monolingual Hebrew texts are limited: they contain only the Hebrew script renderings of שלום (Le Bohec no. 23), or שלום with a preposition and a personal suffix (Le Bohec 24; Figure 3). Most of these brief inscriptions, which are derived from the Gam-

[57] The Semitic language of the scripts is slightly less exceptional within its location in Volubilis in Mauretania Tingitana as this area of North Africa witnessed some of the most common examples of foreign Semitic funerary epigraphy of any area of North Africa. The Roman soldiers from Palmyra were stationed in this region with the IIIrd Augustan Legion and commemorated their deceased with Palmyrene, their corresponding language there. Palmyrene is a Semitic dialect and a variant of Aramaic. The presence of an epitaph in Semitic script, therefore, is not as unusual in Tingitana as it would be in other provinces. Another possibility remains that this text is of much later date (by two to three centuries); only its find context has been used to date the text.

Figure 3. Epitaph from Gammarth Catacombs with sentiment ιδ. Carthage Museum, Tunisia. Photo: author
Text reads: "שלום לו; Peace be to him."

marth Catacombs, have encouraged scholars to describe the cemetery as "Jewish." In these cases the entire one- or two-word epitaphs are in Semitic scripts. Such articulations of שלום probably reflect the use of the word as a symbol, rather than as a sign of more extensive knowledge of Hebrew as a "functioning" epigraphic language (Schwartz 1995, 42; Rutgers 1995, 202). Though epitaphs that contain only one sentiment are rare in North Africa and appear to result from the fragmentation of larger inscriptions (*e.g. Bardo*, no. 80), these שלום texts unusually appear to constitute the entirety of the original epitaph (Figure 3).[58] How does such unconventional language use in Jewish texts compare to that within other North Africa inscriptions?

[58] These stelai are adorned with images and symbols and sometimes they include menorot (Figure 3). Though the edges have been broken off of some of them, the inscriptions appear to be intact and entirely limited to the word שלום or שלם.

C. *Local Comparisons*

Like these Jewish texts, epitaphs from other North African populations occasionally demonstrate the use of commemorative languages that are entirely distinct from those that are regionally conventional.[59] The most popular of the secondary commemorative languages in North Africa's western territories is Greek; Greek inscriptions are relatively rare in the west, but still comprise the majority of non-Latin monoglossic epitaphs in the region.[60] Outside of Tripolitania, Greek emerges principally as an imported language and the highest concentrations of Greek texts have been discovered in port cities and trade entrepôts, such as Carthage and Volubilis, where immigrants' and traders' uses of Greek are more common than in other places.[61] The western Jewish texts in monoglossic Greek derive from these areas.

In addition to Greek, Punic and Libyan constituted other alternately indexing languages of indigenous populations.[62] Punic texts were mostly

[59] Unfortunately, it remains more difficult to establish dates for these inscriptions. Chronologies cannot be as accurately established for non-Latin formulae as for Latin ones. Partly for this reason this section cannot be as easily governed by chronology as the previous one.

[60] The exact number of Greek inscriptions from Africa remains debatable. *IRT* collects 24 Greek inscriptions in Tripolitania. Thieling lists 12 Greek inscriptions from the province of Tripolitania (1–12), four from Byzacena (*Christlische Inschriften* IV–VII), 35 from Africa Proconsularis, including Carthage (13–42, *Christlische Inschriften* I–IIIb), 33 from Numidia (43–74, *Christlische Inschriften* VIII), 18 from Mauretania Caesariensis (65–75; *Christlische Inschriften* IX, X), five from Mauretania Tingitana (76–80). *IRT* is outdated, but provides more updated figures than does Thieling's text, which was originally published in 1911 and republished in 1964. Nonetheless, the paltry numbers in these collections represent the lesser distribution of Greek language texts and fragments from North Africa.

[61] In his massive compendium on Roman North Africa, J.-M. Lassère collects epigraphic evidence for allogenic groups throughout the North African provinces, many of which furnish the majority of evidence for Greek in the territories (1977, 389–417). He uses personal, ethnic, and toponymic elements in names to identify of those of Italian, Spanish, Illyrian, Dacian, Thracian, Macedonian, Bithnyian, and Asian origin. Unlike the eastern portions of the Empire (and Rome for many centuries), North Africa did not experience a trend of Greek language writing in advance of the use of Latin. Earlier Phoenician, Punic, and Neo-Punic dedicatory texts, rather, remain the principle predecessors of the Latin epigraphic trend in North Africa. For such reasons, the presence of Greek in North Africa generally indicates the presence of foreigners and recent immigrants, instead of marking different chronological stages in epigraphic development.

[62] Though some classical authors may have confused Punic and Libyan, it appears that both languages were probably spoken through the fifth century C.E. (Millar 1968). Neo-Punic script evolved from the same language family and scripts as Punic and Phoe-

discovered in eastern *emporia* and western *pagi*, while Libyan texts were mostly discovered outside of urban areas; some of their texts' contents remain untranslatable.[63] The patterns within all such texts, however, are quite consistent. Most are monoglossic—they use one language and its corresponding script in an epitaph to record the name and filiation of the deceased (Camps 1986, 754; *IRT* 654).[64]

In various instances, then, Jewish and non-Jewish texts used regionally unconventional languages, scripts, and formulae to commemorate their deceased. Epitaphs written entirely in Greek in Greek scripts, or Punic and Libyan epitaphs written in language-appropriate scripts employed a complete monoglossia, that conclusively differs from broader regional commemorative practices and indexes complete alterity (wittingly or unwittingly) from African Latin epigraphic culture.

In most cases, when inscriptions use languages of complete difference from North African commemorative practice, its instances might strongly suggest that the person commemorated in a distinct language and script with distinct commemorative formulae (especially when bearing an unusual-sounding name), might have been of foreign birth. The Greek inscriptions, both Jewish and non-Jewish, might exemplify this

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nician, though the actual number of non-votive Neo-Punic texts remains quite small. Despite this, a higher proportion of Punic names, language patterns, and symbolization permeats the corpus of Latin inscriptions. In the past decades, over 1200 Libyan and Libyco-Berber texts have been collected which combine indigenous and proto-Punic (Phoenician) elements in geometrical letter forms. See Chabot (1940).

[63] These texts mostly appear to record the names and filiation of the deceased (Camps 1986, 754). Most studies of Libyan have focused on the bilingual inscriptions and ostraka of Bu Njem and on the study of "Romanization" of Libyans through their positions in the Roman army (Goodchild 1974; Adams 1994; Rebuffat 1989; 1995). Scholars such as René Rubuffat have noticed the impact of Latin writing on the graffiti and inscriptions from the region (*cf.* Chabot 1940; Rebuffat 1989). Unfortunately, these scripts are frequently scrawled, irregular, and illegible.

[64] As these languages are indigenous, it is unclear whether these texts deliberately index difference from Latin-commemorating culture or whether their inscribers lacked the access, interest, education, or resources which might motivate them to use Roman Latin language practices. Foreign Semitic speakers were also stationed in North Africa through the Roman army. Principally, these consisted of garrisons of Roman soldiers from Syrian Palmyra, who were stationed in the provinces of Numidia, Mauretania Caesariensis, and Mauretania Tingitana. Accordingly, Palmyrene (a dialect of Aramaic) and Latin bilingual inscriptions commonly adorn dedications and funeral markers from these areas (Le Bohec 1987; Lassère 1977, 396). Le Bohec asserts that six Syrian military units, including four cohorts and two *numeri*, were stationed in Africa (Le Bohec 1987, 83). Though the total military population within these groups probably numbered 2,000–3,000, the groups were probably not entirely Syrian (Le Bohec 1987, 85).

possibility; most of these are discovered in places commonly inhabited by traders, immigrants, and foreign slaves.

Indigenous African populations, too, employed Semitic inscriptions to commemorate the deceased. The Jewish texts in Hebrew, however, stand out by defying local precedent. Perhaps, in the case of Matrona's epitaph, the use of monolingual Hebrew might indicate that the dedicant's origin was in a place where the Hebrew language was conventionally used. This possible explanation cannot explicate the texts only inscribed with שלום: the ability to inscribe one word from a language system need not require the inscriber's complete facility (or comfort) with that entire language system.[65]

Both Jewish and non-Jewish texts demonstrate cultural alterity through distinct language use. Though commemorators' motivations for employing completely unusual language systems in epitaphs remain unclear, the effect of these patterns is lucid. In most cases, the complete and locally unusual use of language, scripts, and formulae demonstrates a conventional means to index absolute difference from the language practices and identities of individuals' North African neighbors.

V. Conflicting Conventions: Composite Language Use and Complex Indexicality within North African Commemorative Inscriptions

One last category of inscriptions consists of those that employ language signs in composite ways to simultaneously demonstrate alterity and similarity to North African commemorative language conventions. Patterns of integration of multiple languages in inscriptions, uses of second and third languages as translations of identical sentiments, quotations from literary texts in second languages, and transliterated texts all characterize this complex category of epigraphic language. The percentage of composite language inscriptions is much higher in the Jewish corpus than among other regional collections (Table II, C and D). Jewish inscriptions, for this reason, serve as the lens to explore this pattern of North African commemorative language use.

[65] Unlike monolingual texts of other minorities, these Jewish texts are exceedingly limited and do not indicate complete epigraphic facility with any language at all.

Twenty three percent of all Jewish inscriptions from North Africa fall into this composite category and integrate traits of multiple language systems into their epitaphs. At first, some of these complex language patterns appear to adopt language patterns evaluated earlier in the chapter: they *seem* to be monolingual and emulate either conventional or entirely unconventional language systems. Many of these texts, however, subtly use language in more composite ways to simultaneously index distinct cultural spheres. Other minority populations inscribe similarly—they also combine language systems in commemorative inscriptions in specific ways. But upon closer examination, differences emerge in how Jews and non-Jews manipulate commemorative language in composite. Comparing how Jews and non-Jews use language to simultaneously index distinct cultural contexts illuminates which features of North African Jewish language use accord with those of other minorities within North Africa, and which, if any, might hearken to the language practices of other populations elsewhere in the Mediterranean.

A. *Cultural Polyglossia*

One trend of composite language use might initially appear to be monoglossic. In reality, however, it combines the formulae appropriate to one language with the script and language of another. In such instances, a text might use the language and script conventional for one culture, while it simultaneously integrates the commemorative sentiments appropriate to another. One Jewish inscription from Volubilis, for example, uses the date/month/days lived formula, so conventional within Latin inscriptions, but employs the Greek language and script to do so (Le Bohec no. 79). This use of Greek language and script indexes cultural difference, but the formula of the inscription simultaneously indexes broader North African cultures through adherence to Latin convention.

Two non-Jewish Greek inscriptions from Caesaria in Mauretania Caesariensis similarly demonstrate such possibilities (*Thieling* 22, 71). Their word patterns and frameworks are entirely typical of Latin North African inscriptions of the third century, yet the entire inscriptions are unusually rendered in a Greek script and language. One of these epitaphs begins with an invocation to the gods of the underworld, and closes by describing how a certain dedicant, Καστρίκιος Φίωητος, erected the funerary monument for the honor of a Ἰουλιάνος (Thieling

72). Its Greek phrase, Θ[εοῖς]κ[αταχθανίοις], translates and replaces the standard Latin dedication to *Dis Manibus*, the gods of the underworld. The inscriber thus appears to valorize Latin funerary sentiments and concepts, but renders them in a distinct language. The Greek context of the dedicant's name (Καστρίκιος) suggests that the dedicant may have inscribed the text in Greek because it was the only language he knew how to speak, or write. Yet Ἰουλιάνος's name reflects conventional Roman African onomastic, and possibly, Latin linguistic practices. Perhaps the Greek speaking Καστρίκιος honored the cultural identity of his Latin-speaking friend to the best of his own limited ability. Whatever the reason for this combination, the inscription serves to simultaneously index similarity to and difference from North African language practices. In this instance, the linguistically composite pattern within the Jewish text is mirrored by other such comparably patterned North African epitaphs.

B. *Multiglossia as Translation*

Certain other North African epitaphs combine languages in ways that approximate multilingual patterns of translation, whereby one sentiment is rendered equally into different languages and their corresponding scripts. One Jewish text provides the closest example of such a pattern. An epitaph discovered beneath a Christian burial area from Carthage commemorates an "*Annianos, son of Annianos*, in peace," in Greek on its left side, and "Anan in peace" in vertical Hebrew letters on its right (Ἀννιανὸς Ἀννιανοῦ | υἱείος ἐν εἰρήνῃ בשלם[א]נינ; Le Bohec no. 18). The stele provides no indication that either the dedicant or the engraver actually knew much Hebrew (or Greek, for that matter), as the phrases simply transliterate the short name of the deceased and add שלום in Hebrew characters.[66] The sentiment is technically bilingual, but each language renders slightly disparate sentiments. The Greek formula accords with Greek onomastic phraseology, while the Hebrew formula is more abbreviated.[67]

[66] The best published photograph of this inscription derives from Ferron though the stone appears to have been permanently "restored" before this photograph was taken. (1951).

[67] The Hebrew version includes no patronymic, while the Greek does. The Latinate version of this name is relatively common in explicitly non-Jewish contexts (*e.g.*, CIL 8.5299).

Due to the proportion of Jewish inscriptions that include multiple languages (Table I), one might expect that many of them would translate identical sentiments into each of its languages, as does Annianos's epitaph. They do not. This inscription (Le Bohec no. 18) provides the closest example of a Jewish text that attempts to combine multiple languages equivalently—that is, to translate a sentiment from one language equally into another.

In stark contrast, patterns of equivalent multiglossia are widespread among non-Jewish North African texts that integrate multiple languages. The heterogeneousness of the socio-economic and linguistic environment in North Africa frequently required facility with multiple languages—commemorators occasionally used epitaphs as vehicles to demonstrate their mastery of multiple language systems.[68] Certain epitaphs emphasize such multilingualism: these include texts that translate one sentiment identically into one or more languages.[69] Several texts from the region of Tripolitania fall into this category. In these texts, funerary sentiments are translated, word-for-word, into Greek, Latin, and Punic languages and scripts.[70] The simultaneous use of Punic, Greek, and Latin scripts and languages appears demographically appropriate because the names recorded index Punic cultures with various Greek and Latin onomastic overlappings; the deceased possess names such as *Byrycth Balsilechis* and *Boncar Mecrasi Claudius*.[71] The

[68] In different periods and in different locations, degrees of intermarriage between foreign and indigenous people may have varied (Cherry 1997, 71–83), but the social landscape of North Africa was constantly altered by colonization.

[69] Within Africa's heterogeneous environment, it remains unsurprising that we find inscription that demonstrate a more complex merging of different languages and cultural systems (Greene 1997).

[70] *IRT* 654, 655. These texts are generally thought to derive from the second century C.E. Among these texts, there are a surprising number which, at least partly, commemorate the lives and works of doctors. Each of these are trilingual in this particular way (Greek/Latin/Neo-Punic equivalents presented concurrently), as in *Thieling*, nos. 34, 36. The dating of these texts remains uncertain, and photographs and drawings of such stones are difficult to locate.

[71] One such text was found on a block of limestone in the eastern part of Lepcis Magna. It equally records in Latin, Greek, and Neo-Punic Lepcis scripts how the mother of a doctor commemorates the death of her daughter (*IRT* 655). Other texts throughout the territories follow similar patterns of presenting equivalent Latin, Greek and Neo-Punic translations of the same sentiment (*CIL* 8.815 = *Thieling* 32, 1a). In Tripolitania, some inscriptions use Greek to transcribe sentiments that appear to be in Neo-Punic scripts (*IRT* 856), while other texts render Greek terms in Latin script. Fragments of texts from Byzacena indicate this pattern. Some of them are directed to the invocation of victory. One of these reads, in Latin: *Byrycth Balsilechis f(ilia) mater Clodi medici*; *IRT* 655 = *CIL* 8. 2269 = *Thieling* 15, 1b). The Neo-Punic text is not

commemorative formulae accord with Greek and Punic, rather than with Latin conventions, and reflect the more extensive commemorative possibilities afforded by the wealth of these families.[72] In such cases of equivalent multilingual translation, sentiments are equally conveyed in different languages and their corresponding scripts. Inscribers thereby indicate concern for the "read-ability" of these texts in each of its three distinct languages. Accurate communication within distinct language communities appears to be one of the most prominent objectives of this type of language use. A demonstration of thorough access and mastery of multiple languages may be another (Parca 2000, 72).

Comparable use of multiple languages is rare within Jewish texts, despite the relative commonality of the trend within non-Jewish multilingual texts. Non-Jewish multilingual texts more frequently provide verbatim translations of sentiments within each of the languages used, but texts that are equally bi- or tri-lingual are entirely absent from the Jewish epigraphic corpus. What accounts for such a discrepancy? Perhaps some Jews possessed lower rates of active bilingualism in speech or in epigraphic skills, lesser interest in boasting of such a skill on an epitaph, or even lesser interest in accessing speakers and readers of multiple languages. Perhaps, on the other hand, their inclusion of a second language did not relate at all to considerations of an epitaphs' equivalent "readability." Subsequent patterns of Jewish composite language use indicate comparable lack of concern for using multiple languages for the purpose of communication with multiple audiences.

C. *Composite Diglossia*

This third multilingual category includes those Jewish texts that appear to be entirely composite: they combine a variety of languages and

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recorded in *IRT*, but is reported to be identical in meaning to the Greek and Latin texts included. As with many edited volumes with Greco-Roman concentration, *IRT* (as well as *CIL*) rarely print the Semitic text of an inscription, especially in its Semitic script. Occasionally in *IRT*, Reynolds reproduces drawings of Neo-Punic/Semitic texts, but does not transcribe them (*e.g.*, no. 586).

[72] Many of those who produce multilingual inscriptions in the east appear to associate with doctors, who either possessed increased money or education, or more varied linguistic skills than others in the North African region (*e.g.*, *IRT* 586 and 643). Lassère discusses the role of the indigenous and oriental doctor in North Africa: many of their inscriptions were also thoroughly multilingual (*e.g.*, Q. Lenasenus Sipo Seuerianus, C. Terentius Demosthenes, *CIL* 8.26420, 22921; Lassère 1977, 409–10).

formulae without exhibiting any effort at all to translate any one sentiment into more than one writing system (Table I). Such texts frequently contain Greek, Latin, and Semitic languages, scripts, and formulae. The text examined at the beginning of the chapter demonstrates this composite linguistic strategy, as it reads, "To the memory of the son of Abedo (Abedeunis). He lived 7 years," in Latin, and, in Hebrew: "Peace to him/her" (Le Bohec no. 7; Figure 1). In this inscription, no attempt is made to translate any one of its phrases into the second language or script; rather, each component indexes distinct linguistic and cultural milieus. The use of Latin language and script, the early Christian *memoria* formula, and the Punic onomastic root with Greek modifications reflect third and fourth century North African commemorative and onomastic convention, while the integration of Hebrew words and script explicitly indexes linguistic difference.[73]

When non-Jewish texts partly integrate more than one language into an inscription, however, they do so slightly differently. Two such types of composite bilingualism within non-Jewish texts are most comparable to this Jewish one. The first type uses two languages to translate a single sentiment, but preserves certain terms in each language that are not translated into the other. Epitaphs from Palmyrene military garrisons in Africa frequently employ this type of multilingualism. For example, one bilingual Palmyrene and Latin text commemorates the death of a Palmyrene soldier in El-Kantara, Numidia, who had been enlisted in the IIIrd Augustan Legion. The majority of this inscription is translated nearly exactly from the Latin to the Palmyrene. The Latin text reads: "*To the gods of the underworld* [*DMS*]. Syriacus Rubatis, of Palmyra,

[73] For further discussion, see the previous chapter on onomastics. Other Jewish texts appear to contain Latin as well as Greek and Neo-Punic characters. Unfortunately, the poor state of preservation of these texts often obscures the possibility of accurately deciphering such inscriptions. In these cases, the roughness of renderings of the letters also obscures the sense of the inscription. This is frequently the case with inscriptions which include Latin letters, and possibly, Neo-Punic or Libyan characters. One fragmentary Jewish text appears to include Greek, Latin, and Libyan characters in this way (Le Bohec no. 61). The symbols in the text are difficult to reproduce in type and are difficult to interpret. The vocabulary of these inscriptions is so limited, too, that they provide insufficient information about the extent to which even the inscriber of a stone understood or spoke the languages he inscribed. Another one of these is a text that derives from the Gammarth necropolis and was found in a hypogeum between two loculi and appears to include Latin characters, a numerical system particular to North African Latin inscriptions, and Neo-Punic characters (Le Bohec no. 62). The text employs the numbering system idiosyncratic to North Africa and Rome, which uses a "G" shaped symbol to indicate "V" or "five" (*CIL* 8.33; Le Bohec no. 7).

archer of the (military division) lived 45 years, and was a soldier for 8 years," while the Palmyrene text reads: "This is the funerary stele of Syriacus, the son of Rubat, of Palmyra (Tadmor), of the archers of the military division, aged 45 years, *Woe* ("חבל!").[74] This epitaph represents thorough facility with and access to both Latin and Semitic languages. Additionally, while these translations of texts are deceptively comparable, they are not identical. No Palmyrene equivalent is provided for the Latin dedication to the gods of the underworld, D(is) M(anibus) S(acrum). The Palmyrene inscription does not include the number of years that the Syrian served as a soldier. On the other hand, no Latin sentiment is provided to translate "חבל!," the conventional expressive closing of Palmyrene epitaphs that is usually translated as "woe!" Each of these terms is highlighted by its lack of translation into the second language.

Another permutation of this composite pattern occurs when two distinct monolingual sentiments are combined in one epitaph. One such conventional Latin epitaph from Thignica, in Africa Proconsularis, exhibits conventional Latin funerary language, but terminates with a quotation in Greek language and script (Thieling 37, 41=Mél. D'Ec. de Rome 1906, S. 48, no. 31). The Latin portion of the inscription demonstrates strict conventions of second- through third-century Latin and North African funerary epigraphy. The Greek affixed to the inscription does not serve to translate the Latin sentiments, but, instead, quotes a passage from Homer (*Iliad* 6.146).[75] This type of bilinguality, therefore, does not serve to make the funerary sentiment of the Latin epitaph more legible to a Greek reading audience in addition to a Latin-literate one. Instead, the inclusion of a quotation from the *Iliad*, in its original

[74] The second to third century text from Constantine reads: D(is) M(anibus)S(acrum). Surecus Rubatis Pal(murenus) sag(ittarius) c(enturia) Maximi (vixit) ann(is) XLV mi(li)tavit an(nis) XIIII./ PALMYRENE: נפשא דנה די שירכו בר תדמוריא קשטא קטרי מאכסמוס בר שנת 45 חבל (*CIS* 2.31. 3908 Inscriptiones Palmyrenae in Numidia Repertae, Articulus I. Caput 5. 3908, 23 = *CIL* 8.2515; Cooke no. 146). Translation from Cooke (1903, no. 146)

[75] The text reads: *D.M.s.* | *M. Antonius Rufus Honorato fil(ius) Tr(omentina tribu)* | *Thig(nicae). Genius veritatis pius vixit an[nis…]* | *h(ic) s(itus) e(st), o(ssa) t(ibi) b(ene) q(uiescant), t(erra) t(ibi) l(evis) s(it)* | οἵἠπερ φύλλων γενέη τοίη [δὲ] κα[ὶ ανδρων] (*Thieling* 41=Mél. D'Ec. de Rome 1906, S. 48, no. 31).

Greek, appears to flaunt the "cultured" and educated background of the deceased.[76]

These tendencies to quote literary texts in a second language and script in non-Jewish North African inscriptions are also practiced by Jews elsewhere in the Mediterranean. At times, Jews in Rome and other areas of the Mediterranean added Hebrew phrases to epitaphs to quote parts of biblical texts in a second language and script (*e.g.*, *IJO* 3 Syr. 42, 44, 76, 125). Yet Jews of North Africa, unlike other North Africans and other Jews elsewhere, do not use language in this way on their epitaphs. They appear to construct commemorative language in terser ways.

The Palmyrene and Greek language patterns, along with those in Roman Jewish epitaphs, demonstrate how certain multilingual epitaphs only render specific formulae in their corresponding languages and scripts. Isolated terms and phrases are, then, treated as fundamentally untranslatable in some way. The use of these patterns demonstrates a thorough access to multiple languages, but implies how the power of specific sentiments relates to their preservation in their original languages and corresponding scripts.

Though some of the African Jewish, African non-Jewish, and Roman Jewish texts appear to employ the same general patterns of composite language use, the resulting enactments of them differ. North African Jewish texts compile indices they derive from individual cultural spheres and include seemingly hodgepodge linguistic arrangements; they combine languages, phrases, and scripts of diverse linguistic contexts into one short text (Le Bohec nos. 57, *cf.* nos. 33, 57, 59, 61).[77] Comparisons with the local Palmyrene and Greek texts highlight how unusual are such patterns in local contexts. Differences from local bilingual and Roman Jewish texts suggest that Jewish North African texts compose language in internally unified and regionally distinctive ways.

[76] Though Greek may have been a language of immigrants, in certain circumstances it was also a language of status and high education. To a degree, Greeks' cultural status may have impacted its use by Jews and non-Jews in comparable ways.

[77] Even fragmentary texts in Latin and Greek (Le Bohec nos. 33, 59, 61) appear to sustain this pattern.

D. *Reduplication*

Other Jewish epitaphs partly integrate multiple languages into inscriptions in additional ways. Some of these texts employ surprisingly consistent patterns to do so. Targeted reduplication of the funerary sentiment "in peace" is one of the most common demonstrations of this pattern within Jewish texts. The wish that the deceased "rest in peace" is ubiquitous within Latin texts in the west (*in pace*) and within Greek texts in the east (ἐν εἰρήνῃ). Yet the sentiment "in peace" figures distinctly in North African Jewish epitaphs.

In North African Jewish texts, the expression "in peace" is frequently doubled. Marble inscriptions from Gammarth exemplify this pattern, whereby one Latin text in Latin script reads, *MACXIME,* | *IN PACE ET* | IR(E)NE *AN(I)M(A) u(=?) TUA!,* or, "Maxime! Your soul be in peace and in peace!" (Le Bohec no. 51)[78] and another similarly combines Greek and Latin peace sentiments (Le Bohec no. 20). In other texts, the Hebrew inscription of "שלום" similarly supplants the previous Greek or Latin sentiments of peace (*e.g.*, Le Bohec 18). These translations and transliterations of the Latin, Greek, or Hebrew sentiments are targeted and limited. They do not endeavor to render the entire Latin, Greek, or Hebrew phrase into the second language, or combine multiple languages in entirely equivalent ways. Instead, these texts create *couplets* whereby a conventional commemorative expression is doubled to index difference, rather than sameness, to conventional practice. Though the doubled word does not change the literary meaning of the sentiments, the supplementation of a redundant foreign word changes the indexicality of the entire expression.

Couplets, doubled sentiments within one phrase, function as "two words with exactly the same meaning except for their position of occurrence" (Filbeck 1994, 1).[79] Duplications and couplets function

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[78] εἰρήνῃ (variously transliterated into Latin in Jewish texts as *irnê* or *irenê*) is the Greek equivalent of "in peace." Two publications of the text transcribe the first inscription slightly differently: *MACXIME,* | *IN PACE ET* | *IRNE AN MUTUA* in Ferron (1951, 200, pl. VII, 1) and *MACXIME,* | *IN PACE ET* | *IR(E)NE AN(I)M(A) u(=?) TUA!* in Le Bohec (51). Though two restorations of the terminal portions of the texts differ, the readings of *in pace et irne* (an idiosyncratic transliteration of *eirene*) do not. A second epitaph discovered in Gammarth, Carthage, contains a similar verbal pattern: *VICTORINUS* | *CESQUET* | *IN PACE* | *ET IRENE* (Le Bohec no. 20 = *CIL* 8.1091 = 14230 = Diehl 4962). Also see Park (2000, 89).

[79] Much of the research conducted on this topic derives from scholarship of English and French language borrowings from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when English literature frequently demonstrates patterns of describing one sentiment in Eng-

in different ways within distinct languages and contexts, but historical linguists generally agree that "couplets and duplications function as sociolinguistic markers for what is considered highly valued in speech in circumstances" (Filbeck 1994, 96). The meaning of a couplet depends upon its joining of terms, in a significant way, which cannot be conveyed by the mere translation of its individual and synonymous components. In this way, the grouping of couplet-ed words functions on more subtle levels as a means of lexicalization (Filbeck 1994, 96). As such, scholars of translation reiterate the "untranslate-ability" of this type of word use (Williams 1994, 55).

What, then, is the function of the duplicated sentiments in the Jewish inscriptions? The only words doubled are those already apparently understood, even by foreign language speakers, for their untranslatable and "symbolic" meanings (*cf.* Woolf 1995, 32). The couplets' significance appears to relate to their creation of a doubled referent, rather than to a desire to make an esoteric formula readable to different language speakers. In epitaphs, such couplets appear to serve as targeted cultural markers. These patterns suggest an additional language pattern whereby the combination of multiple languages functions not simply to convey a "meaning" of a word, but also to convey ideas in ways individual words cannot. The meaning of the typically Latin Christian sentiment *in pace* indexes differently when joined with the transliteration of the Greek ἐν εἰρήνῃ, or with the Hebrew expression of שלום.

Early Roman Christian texts frequently included wishes that the deceased rest *in pace*. Greek texts from North Africa also use the equivalent concluding expression, ἐν εἰρήνῃ, during the earlier and later periods.[80] This formula is common within monolingual Greek

lish and French equivalents. At the end of his discussion of Anglo-Norman etymologies, William Rothwell provides a useful description of the ways that foreign words may infuse the vocabulary of another language to the point that they no longer appear to be foreign sentiments. He uses the texts of Chaucer as an example: "from a reading of the *Canterbury Tales* it is clear that he [Chaucer] had absorbed French terms from a whole range of different registers, either personally from his dealings with French in England or abroad, or in a more general way from the language he heard all around him. To use the term 'borrowing' for this very large-scale process of immersion and absorption that must have extended nation-wide over many decades is to belittle one of the most crucial movements in the history of the English language. Chaucer's works may be used as perhaps the most eloquent illustration of the fact that in England in the later fourteenth century the lexes of English and French were so imbricated as to be distinguishable only at the cost of some artificiality" (1999, 51).

[80] Leynaud (1922, no. 34) restores a comparable text to read "peace" in Latin script.

texts in Africa and it generally marks the epitaphs that directly identify the deceased as Greek-speaking individuals and Christians from Rome or the eastern Mediterranean (*IFCC* 3.25).[81] Similar sentiments are expressed in Jewish texts in the Hebrew language and script (*e.g.*, Le Bohec nos. 23, 24).[82] In most cases, the inclusion of one or another of these terms, too, depends on the language and script of the remainder of an epitaph (Park 2000, 103).

As the wish for the deceased to rest *in pace* is conventional within Roman North African epitaphs of the fourth century and onward, the Jewish inclusion of the sentiment thus indexes conventional North African commemorative practice. Yet the precise way these Jewish texts double the phrase in transliterated Greek or Hebrew simultaneously indexes alterity. I have not identified comparable couplets among other partially bilingual Latin, Greek, or Palmyrene texts from Africa; this type of doubling appears to be deliberate and idiosyncratic to African Jewish commemorative language use. The "peace" couplet, then, demonstrates one way that Jewish texts manipulate epigraphic conventions to demonstrate distinct cultural identities.

E. *Transliterations*

Another pattern common within Jewish epitaphs consists of the transliteration of one word or phrase from one language into a script associated with another. This pattern is rare in North African epigraphy, but is more common within North African Jewish inscriptions (approximately 10 percent, Table I). One manifestation of this pattern is the transliteration of the names of the deceased; even if a parent has given the deceased a conventional Roman North African name, the commemorator frequently represented that name in Greek rather than Latin characters. The transliteration of such Latin North African names into Greek script, such as Ἀπώνιος Λουσ(ιους) Μαριανὸς καὶ

[81] In a section of his corpus, Wessel collects Christian inscriptions which terminate with the phrase ἐν εἰρήνη. Though he collects inscriptions from North Africa as well as from Rome, all of the Christian inscriptions that include this termination derive from Rome (1936).

[82] One major exception to conventional patterns of bilingual epigraphy in the Roman world occurs in a Palmyrene and Latin bilingual inscription on a sarcophagus from Rome, *CIS* 2.3 3903, which is housed in the Capitoline museum.

Κουντίλα is repeated within Jewish texts in Carthage and elsewhere (*cf.* Le Bohec no. 26, 28, 30, 32).[83]

Other texts include the transliteration of specific words, in addition to names, into foreign scripts. This practice includes translations of Latin vocabulary into Greek script, as in Απώνιλους πολυερ Ῥούφους ("Aponius, the son of Rufus"; Le Bohec no. 27). In some cases, Greek terms are transliterated into Latin characters (e.g., Le Bohec no. 20), but among Jewish inscriptions, the transliteration of Latin words into Greek characters predominates.[84] These tendencies could be interpreted in at least two ways. First, the transcriber of the epitaph may have only been skilled in writing Greek. Perhaps he could only spell in Greek phonetically what the dedicant pronounced for him in Latin. In this instance, the transliteration is based on constraints on the inscriber, rather than on his free choice. In a second case, this writing practice might signify a deliberate strategy whereby a person called by a conventional name in life employed a distinct and Greek spelling for the name when he was marked in death. Perhaps, when the stele was inscribed, the inscriber deliberately used a Greek script to index a type of cultural difference that would be undetectable through the "appropriate" Latin recording of the name and sentiment.

While such patterns of transliteration are found elsewhere in the Mediterranean, they remain relatively uncommon among non-Jewish epitaphs in North Africa. Rare texts might retain sentiments that

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[83] The inscription uses a Greek script, though it exhibits the Latin and Christian pattern of mentioning the spouse at the end of the funerary text.

[84] One example of this pattern from Gammarth, includes the epitaph: *Victorinus* | *cesquet in pace* | *et irenê* (Le Bohec no. 20). The transliteration of the Greek word for peace (*irenê*) serves to translate the Latin statement, *in pace*. Other treatments address the combination of Greek scripts with the Punic language. In his 1983 article, "Una iscrizione giudaica di Leptis Magna," Francesco Vattioni argues that one Leptan Jewish inscription is a Punic sentiment transliterated into a Greek script (Vattioni 1983, 64 = *SEG* 33(1983) 423, no 1540). This is a votive text, which Vattioni transliterates in Greek characters as Ἰωσης θεοδορος το ιχοί βουμα βινιω and translates this text to read, "Ioses Theodoros erected this pedestal." The inscription, which was incised on the Leptan arch of Marcus Aurelius, resembles various others which transliterate Punic sounds into Greek characters on public monuments in Lepcis Magna. Vattioni states that the Punic words (except two) are transcribed in Greek letters. He interprets the suffix of βουμα as either the Greek suffix or the Punic suffix indicating the third person singular); and βινιω as the Punic bnh/bn "to build" (*cf. Africa Italiana* VI, 27–9): "La mia traduziane sarabbe dunque la seguente: Ioses Teodoro la parasta ha edificato" (1983, 64). For examples of this pattern in Tripolitania, see *IRT* 865, from Bir-el-Uaar. A higher proportion of dedicatory texts from Lepcis are similarly rendered in Greek (*cf. IRT* 310, 310a, 311, 312).

transliterate words from another language.[85] In North Africa, some texts typically transliterate Latin into Greek, or, Greek into Latin, though in some cases, Greek sentiments are occasionally transliterated into Neo-Punic script (Vattioni 1983).[86] The fragmentary nature of most of these transliterated texts prevents a better understanding of their original contexts.[87] The motivation for such transliteration remains unclear: perhaps the engravers of the texts could only transcribe into the characters of a familiar script the unfamiliar sounds dictated to them in a foreign language.[88] Alternatively, foreign scribes may have been employed to record a conventional language and formula.

In North African inscriptions, furthermore, Latin names may be transliterated into Greek scripts, and Greek names into Latin scripts, but this transformation usually occurs when an entire inscription is in the transliterated script. Much more frequent in North Africa, furthermore, is the transliteration of foreign names into Latin script.[89] Studies of such patterns cite the latter tendency as evidence for processes of Romanization and connections between "Latinization" and indices of Roman-ness (Cooley 2002, 9–10).[90] Jewish texts usually exhibit an opposing inclination—to preserve the Greek script in epitaphs. The

[85] One text from Thapsus reads, in Latin script, *Telegeni nika* (*CIL* 8.10479, 51 = *Thieling* 33, 6), while another fragmentary text from Hadrumetum includes a Latin transcription of Greek: "…*ti nika*." (*Bull. Du Com.* 1903, 538f., *Arch. Anz* 1905, 80 = Thieling 33, 8). Thieling labels these "gefundene Mosaikbild eines Gladiatrors trägt die übliche Akklamation" (33.8).

[86] Fragments bear isolated funerary sentiments, such as *bene merenti*. See n. 84.

[87] One epitaph from Sicca (modern Le Kef) uses Latin characters to spell out the Greek sentiment, *ENIRENE* (Dain, no. 17). I am unsure of how to categorize the cultural context of this inscription. There remains a possibility that it could have been Jewish originally—it was built into the wall of a church.

[88] The exact context of this text, unfortunately, prevents a definitive interpretation. One other form of mixed language occurs when Greek or Semitic texts employ the Roman numeral system. Certain texts provide complicated combinations of these symbols which are extremely difficult to disentangle. Some of these might combine more obscure Punic or Libyan scripts with Greek and Latin ones (*Thieling* no. 52). Other texts might use a consistent Latin script, but use letters of Greek or Semitic scripts to supplant the Latin characters.

[89] Other Semitic texts from North Africa, described above, indicate the similar patterns of transliterating Semitic names into Latin script and Latin names into Semitic script. In these texts, however, the Latin texts serve as full textual translations—Semitic names are transliterated into Latin characters to accommodate the use of Latin language and script in the Latin text. Only one Jewish text from Damitous-al Karita, in Carthage is transliterated into both Greek and Semitic scripts (Le Bohec no. 18). The simultaneous presentation of names in two scripts is unusual in Jewish inscriptions.

[90] For further discussion of these patterns, see Woolf (1994) and Whittaker (1995).

percentage of Roman Jewish names transliterated into Greek writing strongly counters the regional tendency in the west and may signify additional difference between the language tendencies of North African Jewish populations and those of other North African minorities (Le Bohec 26–30, 79).[91]

The majority of Jewish inscriptions appear to exemplify language practices that are consistent with those of their neighbors (Table I, A, B). Such Jewish inscriptions (roughly 65 percent) use language and scripts that appear identical to those of their neighbors: their commemorative language use thus reflects conventional diachronic shifts in regional language practices. The preponderance of Jewish inscriptions that include standard Latin funerary formulae in the west, or Greek formulae in the east, indicate that in most cases, the conventional North African method of commemoration was a desirable means of Jewish epigraphic expression. Most Jewish texts appear to emulate both local linguistic trends and the cultural notions they index in North African commemorative inscriptions.[92]

In other cases, Jews appear to use language in ways that signify complete difference from local linguistic convention. The patterns they employ are monoglossic and resemble those used by other immigrants and indigenous populations within North Africa. The reasons for such idiosyncrasies are unclear, but the effects of them are definitive: in all aspects they use unusual monoglossic language to index cultural identities that are completely distinct from those of most of North Africans.

The last category of Jewish inscriptions erratically indexes the linguistic conventions of North African commemorative epigraphy. These Jewish inscriptions might initially appear to use language similarly to their neighbors—Jews inhabited the same linguistic sphere after all—but their epitaphs manipulate conventional language tools in distinct ways. Jewish epitaphs might include a Latin inscription in Latin script to

[91] This tendency, of course, is apparent in other inscriptions from other regions of the Mediterranean. Inscriptions from Asia Minor, for example, exhibit this pattern of transliterating Latin-sounding names into Greek scripts. Attention to these patterns here, however, responds to the relative frequency and consistency of these patterns among North African Jewish inscriptions as opposed to conventional non-Jewish ones.

[92] The complete use of Hebrew/Aramaic script and language (though not nomenclature) is exemplified by the text from Volubilis in a more limited way (Le Bohec no. 80).

commemorate the deceased in a standard way, but add a second portion of the text in a distinct language and script that remains untranslated. They might use a couplet to add one word from another language to duplicate the meaning of a standard Latin commemorative formula. They might transliterate Latin names or words into Greek scripts.

Broader trends, however, distinguish how Jews and other North African populations integrate diverse languages to articulate cultural *sameness* and *difference*. In non-Jewish epitaphs, composite inscriptions may serve as a means of translating one sentiment equally into two or more languages. Some of these texts appear to selectively preserve certain words in appropriate languages and scripts: in these cases, the untranslated terms gain greater "symbolic" significance when rendered only in their corresponding languages. In other cases, certain languages such as Greek indexed elite education and status, rather than a need to communicate with specifically Greek-speaking language communities. The objective of these language patterns may also be the demonstration of access to multiple or prestigious cultural and educational spheres. Multilingual Punic, Greek, and Latin texts exemplify their flexibility to integrate multiple languages and scripts in these ways.

Variability exists in the priorities of these non-Jewish multilingual texts and in the related ways their languages, sentiments, and scripts are integrated. These types of linguistic flexibility and variability, however, are absent in the North African Jewish corpus. When texts from non-Jewish North African populations demonstrate multilingualism in composite ways, they tend to display language facility more completely than do comparably composite Jewish texts. The permutations of such patterns demonstrate both the fluidity of language use and the symbolic power of specific words in specific scripts. Jewish inscriptions exemplify only the latter of these two features.

Composite Jewish inscriptions simultaneously index similarity to and difference from conventional North African Latin commemorative practice, but scarce local precedent exists for the precise composite patterns they exhibit. Are such language assemblages entirely arbitrary, or accidental? Or do their methods of signifying *difference from* North African language practice simultaneously signify *sameness to* something else? Though some of the traits polyglossic Jewish inscriptions exhibit are also attested in non-Jewish inscriptions from the region, in most cases idiosyncratic patterns within Jewish texts cannot be explained through comparison with those of other minority groups in the region at all.

F. *Cross-Regional Comparison of Jewish Materials*

A final appeal to language patterns within epitaphs of Jewish populations elsewhere in the Mediterranean might explain the language patterns within this last category of North African Jewish texts. Can comparisons with pan-Mediterranean Jewish texts illuminate North African Jewish uses of Hebrew, composite language use, reduplication, and transliteration within texts—language patterns that are otherwise unattested in North Africa?

1. *Hebrew*

One of the initial and otherwise undocumented traits of North African Jewish epigraphy is the use of Hebrew within monoglossic (and multiglossic) texts. Though Semitic language and script are not uncommon within North Africa, the use of Hebrew languages and scripts does appear to be limited to Jewish inscriptions within the western African provinces. Though its use is limited to six inscriptions in Proconsularis (Table I), the patterns of its use are consistent enough to merit pan-Mediterranean comparison.

Limited uses of Hebrew language, scripts, and formulae, especially through the rendering of the sentiment שלום and its variants, also appear within Jewish funerary inscriptions from elsewhere in the Mediterranean (*e.g.*, *JIWE* 1. 56, 58; *JIWE* 2. 52, 93). Formulas which include Hebrew renderings of שלום derive from areas which range from Achaia (Athens and Piraeus; *IJO* I *Ach.* 36 *bis*) to Sardinia (*JIWE* 1. 71). In comparison to the pan-Mediterranean uses of Hebrew, then, what is particularly unusual about North African Jewish uses is their limitation: almost all North African uses of the Hebrew language (except Le Bohec no. 82) are restricted to expressions of שלום. Other stock phrases, conventionally maintained in Hebrew language and scripts from Rome and elsewhere, such as אמן or שלום על ישראל (*e.g.*, *JIWE* 2. 53, 535, 596; 529, 193, 186), do not appear within the North African territories.

2. *Greek*

Another distinction between Jewish North African and pan-Mediterranean foreign Jewish monoglossia arises in relation to the type of Greek employed within North African Jewish inscriptions. Greek vocabulary and orthography within Jewish epitaphs from North Africa accord

with patterns of Greek vocabulary and orthography within non-Jewish Greek texts in North Africa, but not with Greek necessarily used within Jewish epitaphs from elsewhere, which are also in Greek, such as Rome. For example, conventional Greek sentiments on Jewish commemorative epitaphs from Rome, such as ἐν εἰρήνη ἡ κοίμησίς αὐτουαὐτης (in peace be his/her sleep; *e.g.*, *JIWE* I.50, 118, 46, 101, 53, 48, 16) never appear in North African Greek monolingual epitaphs (*cf.* Leynaud 1905, 14). The adjective to describe the dead as holy, ὅσιος, so common in Jewish inscriptions in Rome, is also absent in the North African corpus.[93]

3. *Composite Language*

Certain patterns in North African Jewish composite language use that are otherwise unattested in North Africa *are* present in Jewish texts from elsewhere in the Mediterranean. Texts that do not equivalently translate, but rather inequivalently combine languages in one epitaph (whether Hebrew and Greek, Greek and Latin, Latin and Hebrew), appear within Jewish corpora from Rome, Syria, Sardinia, and Greece. Many of these texts express one idea in one language and a different one adjacently in another (*e.g.*, *JIWE* 1. 118 = *CIJ* I 629; 120 = *CIJ* I 629; *JIWE* 2. 539, 550 = *CIJ* I 499). Of course, the significance of the languages used in these composite texts differs in each particular context: in Rome, for example, an epitaph that combines Latin and Hebrew could index alterity in all respects through its (1) composite language use and (2) its use of two locally idiosyncratic epigraphic languages. In earlier periods in Rome, monoglossic Greek was the conventional commemorative language, and the use of Latin was more unusual. In North Africa, however, the same pattern would index differently. It would (1) partially index alterity (through the Hebrew) and (2) partially index Sameness (*e.g.*, Le Bohec 7, through the Latin) the conventions of the broader linguistic environment.

[93] For discussion for common epithets in Roman Jewish epitaphs, see Rutgers (1995, 191, 194). One Tripolitanian epitaph integrates the word, but not to describe the deceased (Le Bohec no. 4).

4. *Transliteration*

As do Jewish texts in North Africa, Jewish texts from Rome and elsewhere also occasionally transliterate names, words, and formulae appropriate to one language and onomastic system into the script of another. Most frequently, when this occurs, Latin names in Rome are transliterated into Greek (e.g., Σεκυνδίος = Secundus, *JIWE* I.75; Ἐσπερατοῦ = Speratus, *JIWE* 1.99), although words and phrases are similarly transliterated as well (*JIWE* 2.5). Once again, however, though the North African Jewish *patterns* of transliteration are also present in Rome, the interpretation of the *use* of the Greek script, so common in Rome, is different from that of comparably transliterated texts in North Africa, where Greek scripts are employed more infrequently and signify linguistic difference.

5. *Couplets*

The last pattern within Jewish North African texts that cannot be explained through local analogy is that of reduplication, or the use of couplets. The North African "peace" couplet is relatively common within North African inscriptions, but it does not does not appear to be particularly popular in Jewish inscriptions elsewhere, such as Rome. In most cases, the language of the remainder of the inscription determines whether the text will employ either the expression ἐν εἰρήνῃ, or *in pace*, to convey the sentiment "in peace." In other cases, when epitaphs include the Hebrew expression שלום, the Hebrew word entirely replaces its Greek or Latin equivalents.[94] A tiny number of texts out of all the Jewish inscriptions from Western Europe may simultaneously include both שלום and other peace expressions, but they do so differently, if at all. One combines שלום and *in pace* within the same cluster of disarticulated words on an epitaph (שלום *vivus bonus in pace bonus* שלום; *JIWE* 1.71). Another text that might exhibit this pattern has been extensively restored, so that the resulting text *looks* like it originally included a comparable couplet, but its restoration appears to be too extensive to be entirely trustworthy (*JIWE* I. 275 = *JIWE* 1.42 = *CIJ* I 644; cf. Park 2007, 207).

[94] In one case, "Shalom" is transliterated into a Greek script: *JIWE* 1. 72 (σαλομ).

6. *Pan-Mediterranean Comparison*

Upon closer examination, then, some of the idiosyncratic language patterns within Jewish inscriptions from North Africa are comparable to those patterns used in epitaphs among Jews elsewhere. Such elements include the use of Hebrew, especially the word שלום and a composite type of multiglossia in funerary texts. Other patterns are also comparable—these include the transliteration of certain words and names in epitaphs. Reduplication of words, however, is much less common in Roman than in North African Jewish texts and may have been distinctive to the North African Jewish milieu. Perhaps the North African proclivity for couplets relates to language proficiency and the powers of different languages in specifically North African contexts. While the term ἐν εἰρήνῃ may have effectively signified epigraphic conventionality within Greek inscriptions in Rome, it functioned differently in North Africa. Jews in North Africa, particularly those in Carthage, might have used the duplication of the foreign Greek phrase to index cultural difference in a way that approximated that of the insertion of שלום within Greek epitaphs in Egypt, the Bosphorus region, or Achaia. North African Jews' different relationships to local and foreign languages informed their uses of them.

VII. Conclusion

The heterogeneity of Abedeunis's epitaph introduced only one of the several linguistic patterns apparent among the North African Jewish corpus; approximately 65 "Jewish" funerary inscriptions from North Africa simultaneously demonstrate a multiplicity of commemorative, writing, and naming strategies (Le Bohec 1981, 227).[95] These texts include mixtures of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and possibly Punic languages, scripts, and phrases.[96] When examined in isolation, the

[95] This collection also includes "Judaising" inscriptions. Le Bohec appears to describe as "judaïsants" those inscriptions which appear to indicate a "mixed" Jewish and "pagan," or Jewish and Christian cultural background or physical context. As I disagree with the criteria for Le Bohec's designations of "Jew" and "one-who-Judaizes," I only discuss (and count) inscriptions as Jewish that accord with the requirements I describe in the introduction.

[96] For Punic, see n. 84. As McHoul notes with respect to any semiotic analysis, indexicality is a "critical, rather than just a descriptive concept" (1996, 138). Though it is easier to note than explain linguistic idiosyncrasies, such is the objective here.

diverse combinations of languages and scripts within Jewish texts seem varied, arbitrary and opaque.[97] Patterns of Jewish epigraphic language use emerge as consistent only after Jewish texts are compared to each other and to other inscriptions from Roman North Africa and other Jewish inscriptions from elsewhere in the Mediterranean that display distinct linguistic patterns.

Distinctions emerge, first in North African Jewish and North African non-Jewish commemorative language practices. First, though many of the North African Jewish texts follow normative linguistic patterns, the number of entirely Latin Jewish texts is proportionally lower than that within regional tendency. This discrepancy between general and Jewish language distribution is significant: though the majority of Jewish texts use Latin in the west (74 percent), or even Greek in the east (100 percent), the percentage of composite Latin, Greek, and Semitic texts is disproportionately higher among Jewish texts (roughly 25 percent) than within the multi-regional average.[98] While this could be a function of the inscriptions' rates of survival, the patterns are consistent enough among such small numbers to suggest a disproportionate propensity for such unconventional language use.[99] In multiple cases, and in diverse ways, North African Jews appear to use language differently. Could their use of language to index *difference* from North African-ness simultaneously index *sameness* to something else?

Composite language patterns in many North African Jewish inscriptions appear to simultaneously index local North African and pan-Mediterranean Jewish contexts in locally unusual ways. In still other cases, however, North African Jewish language patterns appear to defy both local or foreign Jewish precedent. Perhaps, in these cases,

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[97] Scholars of Jewish epigraphy have only recently begun to examine language use as a cultural, rather than necessarily a social historical phenomenon. See Horbury and Noy (1992), Noy (1993), and Avigad (1976). Most frequently scholars have noted idiosyncratic language patterns in Jewish inscriptions, but have generally attributed most variations to different community origins or historical situation.

[98] This is especially true in the areas of Mauretania Caesariensis and Tingitana (modern Algeria and Morocco). The percentage of Jewish inscriptions in the Greek language and Greek scripts from Africa Proconsularis, Mauretanian Caesariensis, Mauretania Tingitana, and Mauretania Sitifensis exceeds the general percentage of Greek to Latin inscriptions within those areas.

[99] North African Jewish texts provide no evidence of the languages Jews spoke—though the preponderant combination of Latinate onomastic and linguistic tendencies indicates that the majority of western African Jews were Latin dialect speakers. In all cases, commemorative language serves as a flexible implement to mark the identities of North African Jews *after* their deaths.

the texts are simply erratic. Alternatively, however, they could indicate something else—something entirely and particularly North African Jewish in identification.

The dynamics of Jewish commemorative language practices are inextricable from the North African and Mediterranean environments they inhabited (*cf.* Lapin 1999, 259).[100] Viewing Jews' commemorative lexes as "imbricated" in their local environment, rather than as "borrowed," or negotiated from it, permits different perspectives on the mechanics and objectives of Jewish language use (*cf.* Rothwell 1999, 51). Roman North African Jews employed both local and foreign linguistic tools and used commemorative language as a creative means to articulate their varied positions within the cultural maps of North Africa and the Mediterranean. The diversity of the language patterns these individuals employ bespeaks a commensurate range of identities among North African Jews—varied commemorative language used to describe the dead demonstrates equally diverse identities among the living.

[100] Jews were not borrowing or merely "emulating" North African funerary language: this was the language intrinsic to their funerary expression. Jews of North Africa drew their language entirely from the culture in which they were embedded. Lapin frames his argument similarly: "My point here is not that there was not 'Jewishness' [in Late Antique Palestine], but that it was articulated in the context of a wider world and that attempts to isolate an essential Jewish core, risk missing the far more interesting phenomenon of negotiation. The writing of names of Greek and Latin origin in Semitic characters and the transcription of Hebrew names into Greek suggest ways in which people might make what are identifiable to us as 'Jewish' gestures in a complex linguistic and onomastic situation" (Lapin 1999, 259). Other scholars, such as L.V. Rutgers, draw attention to the placement and variability of languages used in inscriptions. Rutgers also highlights the different ways in which the physicality of texts, their inscription, and their location may furnish cultural clues about those who commission them (1995; 1992).

CHAPTER FIVE

QUESTIONING "JEWISHNESS" IN THE NORTH AFRICAN SYNAGOGUE: HAMMAM LIF AS A CASE STUDY

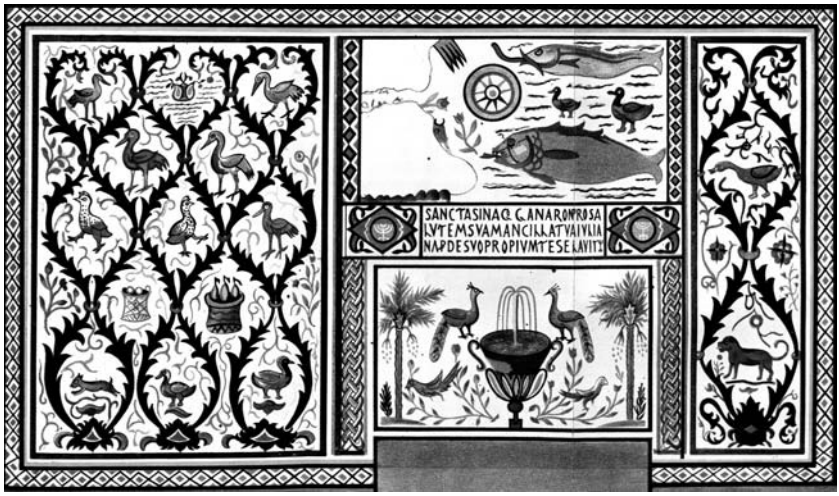

Figure 1. Painting of mosaic floor of Naro synagogue, Hammam Lif, Tunisia
Photo: Renan 1884, fig. 2

Remains from the synagogue of ancient Naro, situated in the modern Tunisian town of Hammam Lif, constitute the most complete archaeological evidence for Jewish devotional practices in Roman North Africa. The mosaic floor of the synagogue's interior, in turn, exhibits the most extensive example of North African Jewish devotional decoration. Sketches in Renan (1883, 157–163; 1884, 273–275) and Kaufmann (1886, 45–61) depict the structure's four figurative mosaic "carpets": one includes lavish representations of foliage designs that encase images of waterfowl and baskets brimming with fruit; a second panel depicts flowering date palms skirted by multicolored birds and an overflowing fountain flanked by peacocks. A third panel contains a duck and a lion and strongly resembles the first. The final panel, located above the second, presents a nautical scene with large elaborate fish, and eel, and waves and transitions into a land scene to its left, replete with

a horned ox and red flowers. A wheel appears between the land and sea scenes and multiple spikes descend from the upper left side of the land scene panel (Figure 1). One donative inscription, flanked by two small menorot, borders these images, while two other inscribed mosaics are inlaid in other floors of the building. Renan's and Kaufman's drawings agree in the majority of their details, though the entire floor is fragmentary and erratically preserved.

Despite the relative conventionality of these motifs in North African mosaics, historians of Jewish art have traditionally interpreted Hammam Lif's mosaics in comparable and strangely bifurcated ways. To some scholars, the Hammam Lif mosaics depict scenes of creation, or the collection of the temple's first fruits (Biebel 1936, 551). The descending prongs configure the "hand of god" (Biebel 1936, 551; Darmon 1994, 24), while the wheel serves as a "wheel of heaven" (Darmon 1994, 24–25). Still other historians of Jewish art, such as E.R. Goodenough, describe the collection of figurative images and menorot as demonstrating disparate and incompatible impulses. His interpretation of the menorot and inscriptions as signals of "Jewish loyalty" contrasts with his designation that "paganism is rampant in the [synagogue's remaining] decoration" (Goodenough 1953, 2.89).

A contextual examination of these mosaics and the building that encases them, however, yields very different interpretations of the synagogue than previous scholars have asserted.[1] A comparison of the mosaics' images to neighboring examples of similar style, use, location, and period deflates arguments for their strictly Jewish biblical or messianic interpretations. Evidence for diverse stages of the synagogue's construction, furthermore, counters assertions that the building's structure and orientation necessarily relate to its intrinsic Jewishness (*cf.* Levine 2000, 260). Rather than furnishing examples of singularly Jewish art and building orientation, or of decorative and architectural programs of two distinct cultural "loyalties," the remains of the Hammam Lif synagogue exhibit more complex cultural indices. Records of the synagogue's mosaics, the building that encased them, and the people who commissioned them, beg different and more careful analysis than former approaches have facilitated.

[1] Lee Levine admits that the mosaics of the synagogue appear similar to North African Christian ones, but argues that the synagogue's structure and its orientation are distinctly Jewish and directed toward Jerusalem (Levine 2000, 260, 303). Please note that some of Levine's discussions of the Naro synagogue have been modified in a second edition (2005).

In this chapter, I suggest that more precise interpretations of Jewish devotional practices and architecture at Naro depend on clearer understandings of the site's archaeological remains and its North African devotional context. As other scholars have noted, devotional art and architecture at Hammam Lif relate both to particularly Jewish, and to typically local cultural contexts. Mosaic decoration that includes Jewish symbols and inscriptions that mention the synagogue's name, the titles of its officials, and its designated appurtenances, certainly mark differences between this structure and contemporaneous North African Christian sacred spaces of the sixth century. Yet diachronic parallels between the phases of the synagogue's construction, its broader decorative scheme, and the phrasing of donative inscriptions in its mosaic floor, along with the architectural, decorative, and epigraphic practices associated with contemporaneous devotional structures from North Africa, suggest something else—that it was North African forms of Jewish devotional expression that furnished the framework for the construction, decoration, and commemoration of gifts in the synagogue at Hammam Lif. Rather than being the coincidence of two disparate impulses, I argue that the construction, decoration, inscriptions, and finds at Hammam Lif demonstrate the substantive emergence of Jewish devotional practices from within their local North African cultural environment.

The effectiveness of previous discussions of this synagogue has been stymied by the very methods scholars have employed. They have principally interpreted the Hammam Lif materials with reference to pan-Mediterranean Jewish devotional archaeology and art and have concentrated their analyses on presumed features of the building's Jewishness (Goodenough 1953, 2.89–100; Hachlili 1998, 207–209; Levine 2000, 260, 303; Richardson 2004). Such discussions of evidence from Hammam Lif have focused on its aspects that most resemble features of other synagogues elsewhere in the Mediterranean. This method has led scholars to classify Hammam Lif's art, artifacts, and construction as particularly "Jewish," despite the close resemblances between the majority of its components and those conventional in other North African devotional contexts. These perspectives, then, have necessarily produced distorted and limited interpretations of the building complex.

A more accurate interpretation of the synagogue's remains requires a broader and substantively contextual examination. The synagogue at Hammam Lif was a devotional system constructed in Africa Proconsularis in the sixth century C.E. Its physical appearance and the social organization it encompassed were enacted according to both local

North African and Jewish notions of appropriateness for its function. Hammam Lif's structure and decoration, after all, do exhibit signs of cultural difference that resemble those conventional in pan-Mediterranean "Jewish" rather than North African devotional contexts. But a determination of exactly what these signs are and exactly where and when they occur is not self-evident—only a thorough and contextual analysis of the synagogue's components can facilitate understandings of which of the synagogue's features are regionally unusual and possibly index "Jewish" devotional practice.

The archaeological evidence at Hammam Lif constitutes only one example of a Jewish North African devotional system. One might wish that a broader sample of evidence were available for the analysis of Jewish devotional practices in the region. Unfortunately, evidence for such Jewish devotional expression in North Africa is exceedingly limited. For years, archaeologists and textual scholars have speculated about the presence of synagogues in Carthage, Volubilis, and Lepcis Magna, based on the discovery of "Jewish" architectural components or small finds, or on assumptions about Jewish synagogue construction in late antiquity.[2] Only the structure at Hammam Lif, however, identified as a "sinagoga" in its own mosaics, demonstrates its definitive role as a Jewish devotional structure in Africa.[3] Its architectural plan, mosaics,

[2] Synagogues of Volubilis and Lepcis are also conjectural; Frézouls (1972) postulates the existence of a synagogue at Volubilis, which he asserts was converted into a basilica, while Ward-Perkins asserts that a synagogue once existed within the forum of Lepcis Magna, which was ultimately converted into a double-apsidal basilica (Ward-Perkins 1952, Pl. XXX). Ward-Perkins argues that the existence of a niche in the structure which faces eastward, a seat, and benches within the structure, identify it as a synagogue which was probably converted into a basilica in the sixth century (Ward-Perkins 1952, 117–11). Neither Frèzouls nor Ward-Perkins's assertions are verifiable. Procopius asserts that Jews from a region of Boreium, in Libya, possessed a synagogue that was said to have been founded by King Solomon, and that its structure was revered particularly for this reason. Procopius claims that Justinian converted it into a church (*De aed*. 6.22–23).

[3] Deposit patterns of Jewish lamps recently discovered at Carthage have led some scholars to postulate the existence of a Carthaginian synagogue (Lund 1995; Docter *per conversation*). Recent seasons of the Danish excavations at Carthage have led some scholars, such as Lund (1995) and Docter (2007), to conclude that they result from the presence of an undiscovered or destroyed synagogue. The discovery of a fourth- or fifth-century column capital decorated with a menorah in Tipasa, Algeria, has led some to argue for its original position within a larger Jewish votive structure (Cadenat 1979). These hypotheses are useful in other contexts, but they will not be extensively treated in this section; their structures are only conjectural and cannot be considered as definitive or sufficient examples of Jewish devotional practice.

and mosaic inscriptions furnish the fullest and most definitive evidence for practices related to a Jewish devotional context in all of Roman North Africa. The remains from Hammam Lif therefore represent only one of many possible temporal and regional manifestations of Jewish devotional practice in the region. In the absence of other examples, they remain exceedingly important to review.[4]

I. Methodology

Any examination of devotional practices, let alone their archaeological manifestations, invites a host of related questions. After all, what are "devotional" practices, and are they useful for broader cultural evaluation? Is it possible to quantify aspects of devotion or devotional acts? Can a review of categories of architecture, decoration, inscriptions, and objects possibly assist the interpretation of these practices? How could one use material evidence to discern devotional practices, furthermore, when the sample of evidence is so meager? Last, how does one circumscribe devotion in the North African world where associated practices differed markedly from those better documented and understood in Hellenized regions of the Mediterranean?[5] The reasonable challenges these questions pose highlight how easily such an examination of Jewish devotional practice might appear arbitrary, superficial, or irrelevant.

In this chapter, every effort will be made to avoid these potential pitfalls. First, I do not impose a devotional cast on the materials anachronistically; ancients identified the building at Naro as a building apart, a "sinagoga," whose constituent objects, acts, and decorations were correspondingly valued. This category, furthermore, is deliberately capacious. Devotion serves as an umbrella-like label for buildings and

[4] Most other evidence for synagogues derives from the related titles ascribed to the deceased in epitaphs in the west. Though later evidence for such titles is selectively articulated in eastern inscriptions (Hammam Lif and Oea), the scattered nature of the sources prevent a diachronic and regional analysis of them. Some funerary inscriptions commemorate synagogue or ritual officials. We cannot fully trace whether the names of title holders shifted throughout time, or the exact ritual contexts with which they associated. See discussion below.

[5] Works such as those of Parker (1998, 105–25), Hopkins (1999, 7–45) and Van Straten (1992, 247–284) more comprehensively address devotional practices and objects in Hellenic and Hellenistic contexts.

practices that relate to space consecrated to deity.[6] The designation encompasses a host of other activities that might fall into this category but for which there is no material evidence.[7] Diverse practices within devotional spaces were concurrently social and economic and simultaneously might have served to assert individuals' political prestige or solidify kinship. All of these activities are simultaneously devotional practices when they are enacted within a devotional context. The breadth of this category, then, accommodates this range of possible practices and permits the comparison of evidence for them at Hammam Lif to that within analogous North African and Mediterranean contexts.

Archaeological manifestations of devotional practices, rather than the affective components of them, remain central to this chapter's focus. Just as names and language serve as signs that may simultaneously index similarity to and divergence from those practices conventional in a region, so too can devotional architecture, art, and inscribed sentiment. To be certain, as with other practices, specific aspects of devotional practice are shaped by constraint—by the sense that *this is how one constructs and decorates devotional space.* Other contingencies also prevent the assumption that the spaces are decorated due to individual choice. Complete agency cannot be presumed to operate in instances of devotional construction, particularly not in the ancient world. Perhaps non-Jewish artisans tiled and decorated the synagogue building's floors, or Christians helped to design the position of its walls.[8] These, as well as the opposite (that only Jews were responsible for constructing and decorating the building) and intermediate (that both Jews and non-Jews were responsible for constructing and dedicating the building) scenarios, are equally

[6] Of course, devotional acts could take place in unmarked space also. Only due to the particular focus of this chapter will I discuss devotional acts that relate to the marked space of the synagogue. Spaces such as pagan temples and Christian churches, furthermore, need not have served only as spaces reserved for deity. At times they may have been spaces reserved for functionaries of a deity's cult, the manipulation of sacrifice, or the collection of individuals. In all cases, however, they generally relate to common practices of devotion in some (or all) of these capacities.

[7] The donative inscriptions within the synagogue, for example, result from a convergence of a variety of practices. Overtly, they are economic—they require a donation of money to an organization. They also participate in a non-monetary medium of exchange—perhaps the donated mosaics are viewed to benefit both the synagogue and God (Lifshitz 1967). In addition, however, the dedicants acquire prestige from this donation—their names are commonly viewed by the entire community, who must be reminded of their largesse each time they enter a room with such dedications.

[8] For discussion of skilled practitioners' production of mosaic in late ancient Africa, see Alexander (1987).

plausible. In all such cases, however, one could not presume that every feature of the building's construction and dedication was built in exact accordance with its devotees' prescriptions. A limited degree of choice, however, is anticipated. At the very least, one might presume that the construction and decoration of a devotional structure must have been at least minimally acceptable to those who used it. Hammam Lif's conventional North African aspects had to be equally acceptable as its idiosyncratically Jewish aspects to those who used the building. I evaluate devotional structures and artifacts according to these provisions.

In other respects, too, I interpret minimally the architecture and artifacts preserved from the synagogue. I make no assumptions about the number and identification of God(s) to whom these materials were devoted, as the comparison of the physical aspects of devotion cannot necessarily substantiate understandings of the beliefs associated with them (*cf.* Elsner 1995, 190–191).[9] Material evidence may furnish specific examples of how North Africans created a physical environment that represented their relationships to deity, but cannot explicate the emotions that might have motivated such acts. Last, I do not suppose that the structures, artifacts, or symbols at Hammam Lif possess fixed meanings—in disparate contexts and times and from distinct perspectives, identical images may have been understood in different ways (Schwartz 2001, 3–7; Derks 1998, 21).[10] Despite the limitations on the possibilities of their interpretation, however, artifacts present a plausible and positive medium to attempt to decipher the cultural identities of those who produced them. Within their discovery context at Hammam Lif, they serve as a useful means to compare how North Africans and other Mediterranean groups constructed physical environments that were appropriate for their devotion to deity.

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[9] For such approaches to devotional architecture, see discussions of "Ritual-Architectural Events" within Lindsay Jones (2000, 33–43). For analogous discussions of discrepancies between Christian burial practices and beliefs, see Bynum (1995).

[10] Interpreting a symbol to possess a permanent and transcendental meaning impedes the possibility of accurately analyzing it. So too, does an imposed division between a symbol's "decorative" function and its interpretation as embodying an ostensibly fixed meaning. For discussion of this problem, particularly in Goodenough, see Schwartz (2001, 133–136) and Smith (1967, 53–68). Perceptions of the significance of a synagogue's structure and decoration most probably shifted throughout time. Perhaps those who attended the synagogue interpreted its decorative program in a distinctly "Jewish" way, which differed from Christian readings of the exact same images (Elsner 1995, 153; also Schwartz 2001, 156); the absence of firsthand accounts makes it impossible to determine how such decorative programs were received.

Though few literary sources can explicate distinctly North African approaches to devotion, the archaeological record furnishes crucial points of comparison for devotional artifacts' interpretation.[11] For such reasons, I depend on the Roman and Christian North African archaeological records to interpret evidence for devotional architecture, decoration, artifacts, and organizational titles from Hammam Lif.

This chapter evaluates evidence for the synagogue at Hammam Lif as components of a whole devotional and architectural system. A more general problem endemic to archaeological approaches to religion and to "religious" structures is a general tendency to view buildings (and the activities that occurred within them) not as "systems," but as parts (Osborne 2004, 3–4; Renfrew 1994, 47). Taxonomies of artifacts frequently displace more synthetic approaches to them. My approach to the Hammam Lif synagogue is distinctive, however, because I consider all of its architectural features and artifacts as relational. I use taxonomies of artifacts as organizational tools for the chapter, but toward the ultimate goal of collectively situating documented aspects of devotional practices associated with the Hammam Lif synagogue. Interwoven networks of social and economic exchange, architectural and decorative practices, yielded a distinctly North African Jewish devotional system at Hammam Lif.

Certain questions about Hammam Lif are tempting but impossible to address here. I would like to ask questions about the physical aspect of the synagogue, its placement in the ancient town, and the decoration of its façade. Was the synagogue in the center or at the outskirts of town? Did it look like any other building, whether devotional or otherwise, or was it decorated to look quite different? Such questions might explore Jews' relationships with others in the town, how they were perceived, and how they marked their spaces in the view of others. Much contemporary scholarship has addressed the perception of religious spaces by members of other groups and provides helpful perspectives on using architecture and architectural decoration to discern such cultural relationships (Asher 2001; Cohen 2002).[12] These approaches

[11] One exception might be Apuleius's more detailed descriptions of "magic" practices in earlier periods, which may apply to understandings of devotion or votive practices (*Metam.* 3.17, 9.29); also see Gager 1992, 256–257).

[12] Catherine Asher argues for a correlation between the placement of Hindu temples in Muslim regions to interpret the relations between Hindu and Muslim groups in Shahjahanabad and Jaipur (2001, 121–48). Richard I. Cohen's work addresses the interpretations of synagogue structures in Germany in the nineteenth century to determine

and their related questions are, unfortunately, impossible to consider here. Evidence for the Hammam Lif synagogue's situation and façade was long ago destroyed, dismembered, and dispersed. The lack of formal mapping of the ancient town and site entirely precludes an understanding of the synagogue's topographical situation, what sorts of structures did or did not surround it in its local environment, and how such placements might be interpreted culturally.[13]

The contingencies of preservation shape this study in additional ways. Poor excavation techniques have most significantly impeded scholars' abilities to better understand the devotional building at Hammam Lif. The amateur methods Captain Prudhomme's soldiers employed to uncover the synagogue have permanently and irrevocably curtailed the possibility of gaining insights into the synagogue's role as a communal center and what activities might have been sustained there (*cf.* Reinach 1886, 221). Time constraints imposed on those who documented the site also limit the data available. Analyses of the building's mosaics depend entirely on the diagrams painted by Renan and Kaufmann; Kaufmann was only permitted three hours to complete his painting in 1884. Discrepancies between Renan's and Kaufmann's drawings, the destruction of the mosaics in their "excavation," and the ultimate loss of the majority of the mosaic panels in their trips through Tunis, Lyon, Toulouse, and Brooklyn have additionally curtailed the possibilities of their interpretation. The near-complete absence of small finds from the site is also significant. Only a handful of letters attest to the discovery of any related artifacts (*e.g.*, Icard 1910, clxxiii) and scarce details of these finds remain within museum archives. These structural and practical concerns inevitably inhibit the scope of this analysis.

Despite this dismal picture, Hammam Lif does present some optimistic prospects for cultural examination. Preserved materials at Hammam Lif offer rare opportunities to approach North African Jewish evidence from a different perspective. Most of the archaeological evidence for Jewish North African populations is derived from funerary and burial contexts; the materials from Hammam Lif provide the only definitive evidence for non-commemorative Jewish practices in North Africa. For such reasons, Hammam Lif's structure, decoration and inscriptions

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the relationship between their placement, external and internal design, and the social relationship between the Jewish and neighboring communities (2002).

[13] Rare mapping of the region is included in *Atl. Arch.* 1.3.

provide rare and important evidence for how one Jewish population and those associated with it may have chosen to represent themselves to deity, to each other, and to their neighbors.

This chapter is structured to accommodate both the nature of the extant evidence and the contextual evaluation of it. The lack of additional data for Jewish devotional systems prevents the use of a transregional and diachronic approach that resembles previous evaluations of naming and language practices.[14] In this chapter, I examine thoroughly each category of evidence from Hammam Lif before I compare it to similar categories of evidence discovered within comparable local contexts. First, I review the architectural planning and design of the Hammam Lif synagogue. The better-documented mosaics from the structure have garnered the most attention, but the building's architectural plan remains equally important to review. Does its construction resemble that of pagan temples and churches from similar places and times? What accounts for related discrepancies and similarities? Next, I address the mosaic decoration cemented to the synagogue's floor. What are the connotations of the images included in its carpets? Are they regionally unique or conventional among North African mosaics? After examining the images in the mosaics, I review the mosaic inscriptions that accompany them. I consider how they compare to inscriptions within other devotional buildings in North Africa. Fourth, I evaluate the significance of the small finds within the synagogue and consider what they are, their uses, and distributions. I then review the resulting matrix of Hammam Lif's votive architecture, decoration, inscriptions, and artifacts to evaluate how each genre of evidence functioned within the entire devotional system. Finally, I consider how the archaeological evidence for the devotional system at Hammam Lif compares to that of other groups in North Africa and elsewhere in the Mediterranean.[15]

[14] The previous two chapters surveyed larger trends throughout North Africa, but the focus of this chapter is necessarily limited to the examination of one structure in one place over a period of time.

[15] In this chapter, I will not address discussions of "pattern books" for mosaics. For extensive treatment of such possibilities, see discussions in Hachlili (1988, 393–395) and Rutgers (1998, 99–107). Such pattern books may have existed and informed the choices of mosaic motifs; any unacceptable standardized motifs would probably not be allowed to remain within the synagogue itself. Though "intentionality" of architecture and design is inherently elusive, it remains possible to approach an understanding of a mosaic's "acceptability" as well as "desirability."

II. Devoting Architecture at Hammam Lif

Both the terrible conditions of the Naro synagogue's excavation and the deplorable state of the site's preservation have dissuaded subsequent scholars from questioning the plans mapped by its original excavating soldiers (Renan 1883, 157–160; 1884, 273, pl. VII, XI, 274). Modern construction, erosion, and destruction near the synagogue site have further deterred attempts to explore the structure's archaeological and topographical situation.[16] Yet the complete neglect of the building's structure is unjustified; despite the structure's enigmatic architectural context, certain of its data remain tenable for analysis.

The synagogue building was situated by the sea near the hot springs after which the modern town of Hammam Lif is named (Kaufmann 1886).[17] The plan of the synagogue is detailed within Renan (1884, 274) and is modified here (Figure 2). Its shaded architectural portions depict the external walls, the entrances to the building and interior walls, small basins ("pierres de cuvette"), decorative mosaic, and white plain mosaic (Figure 2). The building was positioned on a northwest by southeast axis. According to Renan's measurement scale, the main building measured approximately 19.1 m × 18.5 m, while an architectural element resembling a porch (10 m wide by 2.3 m long) protruded 4.4 m from the base of the structure on its southwestern side. The structure appears to have possessed three entrances and sixteen rooms of various sizes. Distinct architectural features—such as columns *in antis*, a small apse, and large stones—marked different portions of the building (Rooms 1a, 5, 4d, respectively). Some of the structure's broadest rooms included both figurative and inscribed mosaics, while other rooms contained mosaics of solid background without decoration (1b). Several small finds of ambiguous provenance were deposited within the building (Reinach 1886, 220–222; Pinard 1956, 82). It is unclear how many people this entire space might have accommodated.[18]

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[16] One basilica and pagan and Christian necropoleis were also apparently uncovered in the region (Icard 1910, clxxii). Through the structures were apparently excavated, records for them have been challenging to trace.

[17] Earliest scholars identified the site of Hammam Lif with the point on the Peutinger Table labeled *Ad Aquas*, or "Aquae Persianae," according to Monceaux (1903, 331–2), who also associated this place with *CIL* 8.997, *via* Apuleius (*Flor.* 18).

[18] The different functions of the individual rooms, furthermore, complicates interpretations of how many people might have been intended to fit inside of them. Storerooms

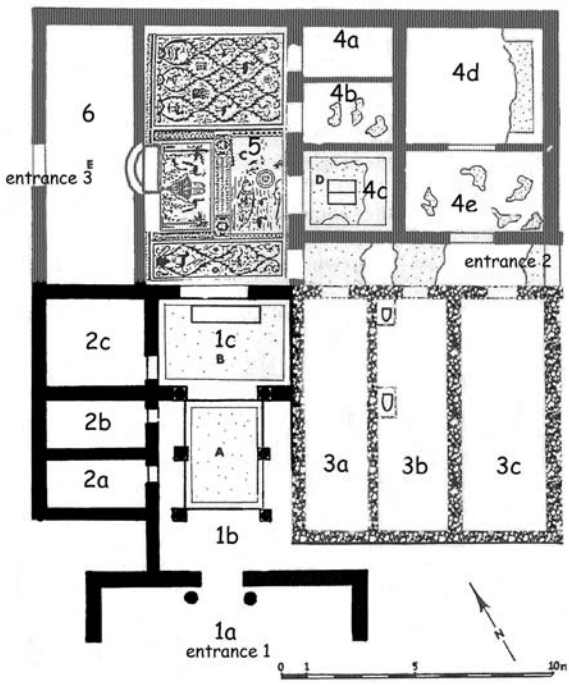

Figure 2. Floor plan and phasing of Naro synagogue
Plan: Author's adaptation of Renan 1884

The first entrance to the building faces northeast from the southwest. This entrance contains a wall (9.6 m) fronted by two columns *in antis* and leads into two rooms of longitudinal proportions. The related chambers (1a, 1b, and 1c) appear to be self-contained; this series of rooms is colonnaded and terminates with a dedicatory inscription in its northeasternmost portion. The remaining rooms in the southwesternmost half of the structure are perpendicular to the previous; three horizontally proportioned rooms (2a, 2b, and 2c; 3.6 m wide × 1.6 m long, 3.6 m wide × 1.6 m long and 3.6 m wide × 2.9 m long, respectively) are aligned on similar axes and accord with evenly placed entrances in the western sides of Rooms 1a, 1b, and 1c (Figure 2: black section).

To the east of 1a, 1b, and 1c are three additional rooms of longitudinal proportions: 3a (2.0 m wide × 7.8 m long), 3b (2.5 m wide × 7.8 m long), and 3c (2.9 m wide × 7.8 m long; Figure 2: speckled section). In

were small, while rooms like *cellae* of pagan temples, for example, might have been bigger, but were not necessarily built for the purpose of accommodating many people at all.

3b, the middle of these longitudinal rooms, are two "pierres en forme de cuvette," .20 m in height (Renan 1884, 274). These rooms could now only be entered from the north through the passage through the eastern entrance (Figure 2: entrance 2), but the placement of the basins ("cuvettes") indicates that these rooms may have originally been entered from the west.[19]

The northern portion of the structure appears to have been entered through the east (entrance 2) or from the south (1c) (Figure 2: grey section). The central room with the grand mosaic (5) has the largest measurements (9.0 m wide × 5.25 m long), while the flanking rooms are smaller: 4a (3.0 m wide × 1.8 m), 4b (3.0 m × 2.0 m), 4c (3.5 m × 3.0 m), 4d (6.0 m × 4.0 m), and 4e (4.8 m × 2.9 m). Rooms 4d and 4e are accessed through entrance 2; and 4a, 4b, and 4c only from Room 5. In the northermost portion of the building is a longitudinal room (Room 6; 3.0 m wide × 9.0 m long), which appears to be accessible only from the west (entrance 3). The function of this room is unclear. An apse appears to have been cut into the west wall of Room 5, which subtracts slightly from the area allocated for Room 6.

A. *Rooms and Orientation*

Scholars of Jewish art and archaeology have used distinct Jewish analogues to interpret aspects of Hammam Lif's design and uses. Although the plan of the synagogue has been ignored, certain of its architectural features have been compared to those synagogues built elsewhere in the Mediterranean, *e.g.*, Hammath Tiberias (Hachlili 1998, 48). Most discussions of the synagogue's structure derive from interpretations of the rooms that were decorated with mosaics and particularly focus on the room with the apse. Scholars have assumed Room 5 to be the most important room in the building, as it was documented as possessing the most elaborate of the decorated mosaic carpets. Goodenough has calculated that this room could have accommodated fewer than 25 people (1953, 2.94), but the exact function of the room is unclear and it remains difficult to directly correlate the size of the room and its use.[20]

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[19] There is little indication of what Renan means by "basins." It is possible that they are dowel holes, or that they could have been made of stone. Unfortunately, this label on his map is the only discussion provided of them (cf. Renan 1884, 274).

[20] Goodenough suggests: "The detail arrangement is not as in any other synagogue we have found. Actually, the room with the great mosaic and niche, along with the

Goodenough has called this room the "assembly room" (1953, 2.92), while Brooten suggests that the same room functioned as a space for "visitors" (1982, 128–129).

The apsidal feature of the room has prompted another set of postulations. Goodenough posits that the apse was a "niche," which would have enclosed a "throne of Moses," though there is no archaeological evidence to support the presence of a chair in this space.[21] Hachlili, alternatively, suggests that this space accommodated the placement of a Torah shrine (1998, 72–73).[22] Unlike the situation of "niches" in synagogues from elsewhere, however, this feature appears to resemble a structural apse rather than a niche—it is larger in dimensions in relation to the surrounding room (approximately 2 m wide) and is more symmetrically placed in the wall.[23]

Goodenough and Hachlili present additional hypotheses to interpret the building's structure. Goodenough postulated that the building was used for a Torah-centered service, which congregants could have beheld from rooms surrounding the mosaic hall (1953, 2.90). He states, "perhaps it should be remarked here that this complex of rooms with its inner shrine is the very sort of thing that a religious group which conceived of itself as a mystery would have constructed. . . . [S]uch a complex, in modern times, is much more like a Masonic temple than a church" (1953, 2.92–93).[24] The structure of the synagogue relates

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three inner rooms, may have provided the special place for the chief servers and celebrants, while the rooms by which one approached it between the columns may have been the outer place for fewer people, and even 'God-fearers.' Those who had access to the inner rooms would normally, I should guess, have come in by the east door and corridor, washed their hands at basins a and b on the left, then gone into the service. The main inner room was no more than 17 by 29 1/2 feet and, if space was reserved in it for the conduct of a ritual, could not have had place for more than 25 people. I strongly suspect that not much over a dozen were in this room during the services. But, unless a community of this size were made up of extraordinarily wealthy men, or unless it was led by a patron who, contrary to Jewish custom, remained anonymous, it could not possibly have required or built so expensive a structure" (Goodenough 1953, 2.94). While this interpretation is thorough it remains entirely speculative.

[21] "Thrones of Moses" are generally asymmetrically placed in a room (as postulated in synagogues at Delos and Ostia) and contain architectural elements to emphasize their function. See discussion in Hachlili (1998, 48).

[22] As per her discussion of the synagogue at Hammath Tiberias (1988, 180, fig. XI.I).

[23] For example, the "seat of Moses" at the Dura Europos synagogue, for example, is smaller (approximately 1 m in diameter as opposed to Hammam Lif's 2.4 m). On Delos, see Hachlili (1998, 39).

[24] Goodenough adds that the outer room to the west of the southern entrance may have been used as a hostel, but, argues that "it seems to be more likely, from its

to the nature of what occurred inside, but the activities Goodenough describes accord with anachronistic assumptions about the function and design of the ancient synagogue.[25] Hachlili builds upon many of Goodenough's claims about the architecture of the building. She adds that its structure should be understood to have been part of a Jewish quarter in Hammam Lif.[26] No archaeological evidence indicates the presence of a Jewish "quarter" in Hammam Lif, even though the building could have possessed a communal context and function.

Last, despite the direction of the building indicated on Renan's diagram, Goodenough asserts that Rooms 5 and 6 faced Jerusalem. This does not appear to be the case—these rooms face southeast. Levine, like Goodenough, additionally emphasizes the significant orientation of the building and declares that the entire building is arranged according to an eastern orientation; he suggests that there are "strong indications of this" (Levine 2000, 260). Both of these arguments are strange: they do not articulate which feature of the architecture might "strong[ly]" determine the entire building's eastern orientation.[27]

In light of these previous readings of Hammam Lif's architecture, how can one evaluate previous arguments about the building's construction and its uses? Does the synagogue's plan and orientation indicate specifically and exclusively Jewish features that are comparable only to those of other synagogues in the Mediterranean? The reexamination of the structure itself provides the most stable method to address these questions and to evaluate these pre-existing arguments about the building's structure and its implications. Different understandings of the

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total isolation, to have been designed for the women" (1953, 2.90). Other of the side rooms to the east might have been used for "storage," or preparation to enter the main chamber. All of these assertions appear to derive from a series of Goodenough's larger presumptions about the institution of the synagogue generally.

[25] For a discussion of a range of activities possibly conducted within the ancient synagogue, see Fine (1997).

[26] Such a suggestion would appear to make sense since some African churches functioned comparably, as quarters and complexes, in later periods. Hachlili argues that the structure was built as a synagogue, but describes the existence of an associated Jewish "quarter" (1998, 141). Levine may imply such a possibility in his description of the synagogue as a "villa complex" (2000, 260, 301).

[27] Levine asserts that "The small synagogue hall (5.25 m by 9 m) was located at the center of the villa complex, with an apse set in the middle of the western wall. Ordinarily, one might assume on this basis, that the synagogue was oriented to the west; however, in this case, there are strong indications that prayer was directed to the east" (Levine 2000, 260).

building's plan yield different conclusions about its structure and use than those presented by Goodenough, Hachlili, and Levine.

The first step toward the building's examination is the acknowledgement that it is not a unified structure. Previous analyses have assumed a unified phasing for the building's construction, though several of its features suggest otherwise. The alignment of sections of the building and the entrances that correspond to them indicates that the building's parts were only joined at ultimate stages. Entrance 1 and the colonnaded rooms that open to the southwest (1a, 1b, and 1c), appear to be of unified northeast/southwest orientation (Figure 2: black). The rooms to the structure's west, with orientations perpendicular to Rooms 1a–c, possess evenly spaced entrances in Rooms 1a–c. If these rooms (2a–c) were not constructed at the same time as the central rooms (1a–c), they were probably constructed for access to these rooms specifically through the larger entrance 1. The southeast rooms possess unified proportions and orientations and differ from the previous: they cannot be entered through the other set. The orientation of these rooms toward those in the north suggests that they were built in relation to the northeastern rooms alone (Figure 2: speckled).

The northernmost rooms in the building (Rooms 4 and 5) are accessible through Room 1c through its northernwest. The entrance to Room 5 is asymmetrically placed in Room 1c; the construction of this portico and the commission of the mosaics that commemorated its decoration appear to have been created in a later phase of construction. These northern rooms (5, 6), furthermore, possess different orientations and architectural features (west facing east versus south/southwest) than do the southernmost rooms (Figure 2: grey).[28] The symmetricality of the apse constructed in Room 5 indicates its deliberate construction in the room's next phase of building, which may have been contemporaneous with the mosaics' inlay.

Subsequent destruction of the site at Hammam Lif has deprived scholars of the ability to examine the actual structure of the building for phasing; the 1883/1884 drawings of the structure's foundations remain the most current depictions of its architecture. It is unclear, furthermore, when the northern and southern halves of the building might have been constructed and joined. Each half possessed different

[28] The function of the basins ("cuvettes") or dowels, and the time they were placed within the structure, is unclear.

directional axes, but none of them appears to face east. Subsequent alterations to the building may relate to significantly different uses and cultural milieus: structural changes may correspond with shifts in time, use, and population. Such distinct phases of Hammam Lif's architecture and orientation correspond with shifts in popular devotional architecture during different periods in North Africa from the third through sixth centuries.

B. *North African Devotional Architecture*

The establishment of Hammam Lif's architectural chronology facilitates more precise interpretation of the building's phases. Architecture for African cult centers largely varied according to region, but basic shifts in African devotional architecture were also attributable to varied constituency, logistical requirements of devotional activity, and the deity to whom the cult was directed. Changes in Hammam Lif's structure correlated with broader diachronic trends and local standards for devotional architecture.

In earlier periods in Africa, cult centers integrated Punic, Libyan and Roman styles of devotional architecture. "Semitic" styles, usually associated with Punic cult, were longitudinal with chambers on the side (Mattingly 1994). "Classical" devotional architecture in North Africa, however, frequently followed patterns that were common in other areas of the Roman Empire. The orientations of these temples varied; the majority of them possessed longitudinal proportions and were most frequently colonnaded (*cf.* Gros 2001, I, fig. 220). *Cellae* were situated in the back of the temple edifices; sometimes devotional structures possessed one *cella*, while others possessed multiple *cellae, e.g.*, Lambaesis (Janon 1985, 45–65).[29] The exact design of these temples related to the

[29] Those who were directly responsible for building the edifice, whether it was commissioned by the Roman army or by local officials, helped determine its exact design. Many of the temples, especially those built in the Severan period, such as those in the capital of Sbeitla, accord with stereotypical Corinthian proportions and design (Gros 2001, 195; Duval 1974). Such edifices were originally structured to be at the heart of the public life of the city. The temples of Jupiter, Minerva, and Juno were built as the centerpieces of the forum in Sbeitla (Duval 1973, 23). These temples were entered from the southeast, and were situated on a northwest/southeast axis. Though it is impossible to date these structures definitively, they appear to be of the second century C.E. and are built upon constructed podiums (Duval 1973, 25). Though the front of the buildings contained the main entrance, the structures could be entered laterally. The Sbeitlan

activities associated with the space. Sacrifices were usually not performed within the classical-style temple itself. Occasionally sacrifices may have been brought to an altar in the front of the temple, but the vast space in front of the edifice was usually used for processions or for the taking of the auspices.[30] Such temples, therefore, were not constructed to accommodate the practice of sacrifice within them.

Shifts in devotional spaces responded to changes in time, fashion, and cult. Earliest church architecture varied, but still corresponded to the traditional forms used in earlier Punic and Roman devotional spaces. Despite the number of churches excavated throughout North Africa, correlations between style and dating frequently remain inconclusive; earlier churches are of such diverging regional typologies that their chronologies are inexact.[31] As Krautheimer and others have argued, accordingly, the political history of North Africa had surprisingly little bearing on changes in church planning (1965, 138). Distinctions in earliest Christian ideologies generally did not determine the shape of the structure that encased its devotees.[32]

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temples were frequently tetrastyle—preceded by an entrance with four columns supporting a "fronton" with a false colonnade (Duval 1973, 27). The central room of the temple was the largest and surrounded by columns. Though this cluster of buildings is not entirely paradigmatic for those built during the early Republic, these features are entirely common in Africa, as exemplified by the prostyle temple at Timgad.

[30] The Temple of Saturn at Dougga exhibits this pattern of consttruction (*MHI* I, pl. XXVII). Architecture in Roman North Africa had traditionally been informed by both Punico-African as well as Roman traditions. Normative North African devotional architecture from the Roman period, therefore, varied according to the exact populations erecting buildings and the gods to be revered within them. Later ritual architecture reflects its embeddedness within accrued African Punic, Roman, and Christian contexts. For discussion of relationship between architecture and devotional practice, see Elsner (1995, 190–200).

[31] Richard Krautheimer asserts about churches from this area that "our ignorance regarding their dates, style, or planning, is appalling" (1965, 138). Krautheimer's explanation of this problem remains accurate; he critiques archaeologists' artificial alignment of differences in archaeological development with distinctions of historical periods and argues that no such correlations exist. He asserts that this tendency is due in part to obsolete publications and poor excavation techniques in the past, but also to the widespread propensity for aligning architectural chronology of Mediterranean Africa with its political history: as a Roman province prior to 427; under the Vandals from 427 until the Byzantine conquest; and as a Byzantine province from 534 until the Arab invasion in 647 (1965, 139).

[32] Only through the use of inscriptions can the archaeologist usually discern between the churches of distinct groups. As Krautheimer notes, "Donatist or Arian Vandal structures can be distinguished from orthodox Catholic churches only if demarcated by a distinctive religious inscription" (1965, 140). In contrast, White argues, along with Frend, that the Donatist structures remained simpler than their Catholic counterparts

The earlier phases of some church buildings from the third through fourth centuries, nonetheless, appear to correspond with Michael White's classification of the broader development of the "Aulus Ecclesia" architectural style in the Mediterranean (White 1992, 127).[33] This type, common in the later principate, maintained a tripartite structure; its inclusion of three separate halls distinguished it from a true basilical plan (White 1992, 128).[34] Though the "Aulus Ecclesia" style is distinguished as a general developmental stage in Christian organization and architecture, its design was remarkably similar to earlier monumental cult buildings in the North African tradition such as the Temples of Jupiter and Minerva, at Sbeitla; and the Basilica at Zana (Figure 3). The use of this style of church construction in Africa, then, may relate specifically to local architectural traditions.

In later periods of the fourth to sixth centuries, churches adopted post-Constantinian basilical structures that remained consistent throughout place and time in North Africa.[35] Related North African church architecture remains extremely conservative and follows several select basic types (Krautheimer 1965, 140). The first type is relatively common throughout Africa and other areas of the Latin west and includes "a high nave supported by arcaded colonnades, occasionally preceded by a narthex or an atrium, flanked by two low aisles and terminated by a semicircular apse" (1965, 140). A second Constantinian plan is

(White 1992, 126; Frend 1957, 53–4). For the most part, however, mid-sized basilicas of different orientation appear indistinguishable by design, if not by scale.

[33] As White describes, "It should not be a surprise, then, that in the year 303 the church edifice at Cirta was still very much a house in place. Perhaps it also served as the bishop's residence or maybe it had been his own house before. It is uncertain, but it may be significant to the development of North African Christianity in general that Augustine's church at Hippo Regius is now thought to have grown from what was originally an adjacent peristyle house and then served as an episcopal residence (White 1992, 126).

[34] In the 260s, Porphyry noted such similarities of third-century pagan and Christian structures at Rome, as Christians criticized pagan cult practices, though the Christians themselves constructed "great buildings…imitating the construction of temples" (*Chr*; frag. 76; *CDDE* 29; White 1992, 129, n. 105).

[35] Krautheimer argues that it remains nearly impossible to distinguish between the church plans from each of the seven administrative provinces (1965, 140). Regional consistencies in the design of later North African churches impede the establishment of structures' precise dates of construction and only building inscriptions can provide more definitive indication of date. Krautheimer's only exception to this is an effect of the sixth century Byzantine invasions: "[t]he Byzantine occupation of North Africa marks a caesura in church planning, at least in the provinces most strongly byzantinized: south-eastern Tunisia, Cyrenaica and the Djebel Aurês" (1965, 140).

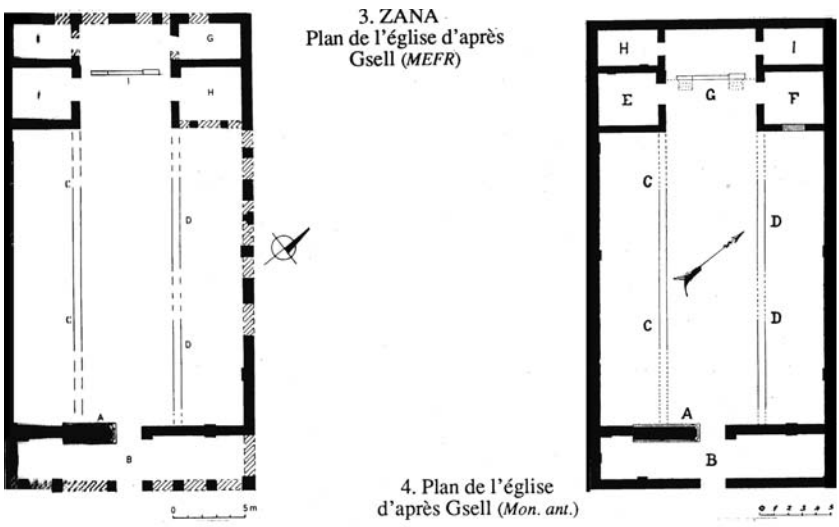

Figure 3. Floor plan of the basilica at Zana, Algeria
Reproduced with permission of Institut d'études augustinienne
Plan: After Gsell, *BCAN* I, 2.51.3; 2.51.4

also common. This type is classified by different architectural features whereby "the nave is flanked by four or more aisles, recalling the four-aisle Constantinian basilicas" (1965, 141). Some of these buildings, for unknown reasons, expand in dimensions to include six or eight aisles.[36] Yet other churches appear to have retained the horizontal or longitudinal colonnaded structure used by earlier Roman temples.[37] Some of these buildings were probably converted from Roman temples to churches, *e.g.*, Sbeitla I, though other churches appear to have been

[36] The church at Tipasa exemplifies this (*BCAN* 1, 2.9.1). Krautheimer additionally assesses that the materials for these structures were relatively uniform. "Churches throughout North Africa were built with local stone, cut into small blocks and held into place by vertical stone posts and horizontal chains. Timber roofing was the rule, except for the stone vaults of apses and baptisteries. The columns supporting the nave and aisles, as well as their capitals, are also cut off the local stone. Ornament is scarce and crudely continues a late classical tradition in carving, stucco, and decorative wall painting. Roman spoils are rarely employed" (1985, 141).

[37] Such non-apsidal churches appear to have been particularly popular in regions of Mauretanian Caesarea and Numidia (Hr Guelil, according to Gsell; *BCAN* I, 2.83; Zana in *BCAN* I, 2.51.3). Certain of these possess three smaller cellae, which extended from a room with a small collonade (Henchir El Beïda; Oued Rhezel 6; Teniet el-Kebsch 1). Some of these structures were asymmetrical in their arrangement of rooms or contained successive antechambers (Henchir El Azreg1; Henchir Tikoubaï, *BCAN* I, 2.93.6; I, 2.96.2–3).

built with a single-apse structure that was longer than wide (*cf.* White 1992, 20–26).[38] Frequently these types contained baptismal fonts in the back and martyria, as in the basilical structures of Caesarea, Hammam Righa, and Tizgirt I (*BCAN* I, 2.7.2–3; I, 2.15.2; White 1992, 128).[39]

Churches' orientations varied. Some were constructed diagonally on north/south axes, *e.g.*, Hr Guellil, Tiedout (*BCAN* I, 2.40.1–2), while many other structures were accessed from the west, on a strictly east-west axis, and with an east-facing nave, *e.g.*, Drah Souid (*BCAN* I, 2.44.3) and Hr El Beïda (*BCAN* I, 2.44.3).[40]

Late African churches were frequently joined to other buildings with related functions. Complexes built around churches—so-called "Christian quarters" at Bône and Djemila in Algeria—indicate that communal feasting, lodging, and cooking functions occurred within church precincts. The structural integration of devotional and related buildings indicate both functional and ideological continuities between sites of devotional, eating, and gathering practices.[41]

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[38] Cyprian mentions elevated places, within such spaces, from which officials would speak (*ad pulpitum venire; Ep.* 33; *Ep.* 38.2). Such an elevated space does not appear to have been marked archaeologically, though it appears to have functioned prominently within the votive activities of the church.

[39] Many of these single apsidal churches possessed longitudinal single, double, and triple colonnades according to their scale and lavishness (Tipasa, *Eglise* 1 and 2; *BCAN* I, 2.9; 2.9.4). Sometimes these apsidal orientations would be of more horizonal proportions, or expanded by assymetrical series of rooms and antechambers (Aïn Tamda). Only later churches aquired the double apsidal construction (*BCAN* I, 2.14). For further discussion of this architectural development, see Duval (1973, 33–37, figs. 15–17).

[40] It is unclear whether the orientation of these churches corresponded to ideological differences, but there is no indication that they did (Krautheimer 1965, 139). Earlier on and for necessary reasons, Christian basilicas and churches began to be built at the outskirts of town. Unlike the Punico-African and Roman temples, which had been constructed in the center of the forum (Sbeitla, Bulla Regia, etc.), for pragmatic reasons, the earliest churches had to be built farther away, on the fringes of town. During later periods of the fifth and sixth century, when various Christian sects had gained prominence, Christian churches replaced other structures in the town center. In specific areas, this replacement was literal—churches were converted from the pagan temples and gardens that preceded them. For such conversions at Ammaedara, see Duval (1972).

[41] Krautheimer notes the importance of reviewing churches as communal structures. He states that basilicas and churches "ought to be seen as part of a building complex that comprises the bishop's palace, dwellings for the clergy, dining rooms for community banquets, often of trefoil plan, libraries, store rooms, bakeries, oil presses, and the like. The 'Christian quarters' unearthed at Djémila and at Bône—St Augustine's Hippo—are two of many examples. They provide a picture of community life in the fifth century far more lively than it can be visualized elsewhere. At the same time, they suggest that conservative North Africa preserved tenaciously the concept of the pre-Constantinian community centre with its fusion of secular-utilitarian and sacred elements in one and the same structure" (Krautheimer 1985, 145).

C. *Reconsidering Hammam Lif's Architecture in Context*

How do additional North African examples of devotional buildings, and their construction, dating, orientation, and use bear on interpretations of the construction of the synagogue at Hammam Lif? First, they indicate that the different segments of the Hammam Lif structure correspond with distinct and sequential styles of devotional construction in North Africa. The portion of the Hammam Lif building with unified northwest/southeast orientation corresponds with Roman and Christian *Aulus Ecclesia* votive architecture of the third and fourth centuries (Figure 2 black, rooms 1a–c, 2a–c, entrance 1). It possesses three colonnaded rooms that include a *cella* (1c), adjacent secondary rooms (2a–c), and an orientation that corresponds with other structures from similar periods. When viewed as distinct from the other architectural components, this portion appears to entirely replicate the constructions of temples and earlier churches that developed from domestic spaces in North Africa.

A different section of the building corresponds to later basilical designs of the fifth and sixth centuries (Figure 2: grey). This portion resembles a miniature version of later Christian basilical styles, which contain central and peripheral rooms. The design of Room 4b distinctly resembles proportions of apsidal rooms within basilicas of the fifth century, such as that of the basilica called "De Bellator," Basilica I at Sbeitla, which was built into the structure of a pagan temple (Duval 1973, fig. 18). The proportions of this section of Hammam Lif also resemble the measurement ratios of such Christian structures (*e.g.*, Church A, Sitifis, Algeria; *BCAN* I, 2.85).[42] The similarity of the sketched image of one Corinthian capital found within the synagogue structure to those of other capitals from Christian basilicas might support the later dating of this portion of the building.[43] The speckled rooms (Figure 2, 3a–c) are entirely inaccessible from the previous structure and appear to have

[42] The baptistery cut into the basilica at Sbeitla shares the same shape and similar measurements to Room 4b. See Duval's discussion of "Le Baptistère devenu Chapelle de Jacundus (Duval 1973, figs. 24, 44). The church at Sitifis, for example, measures 25 m × 11.75 m in the west and 11.35 in the east. These measurements are comparable to those of the entire structure at Hammam Lif. Another in Aïn Kebira, on a south-southeast orientation, measures 23.40 m × 14.60 m (*BCAN* I, 2, 26.5).

[43] Of course, within such contexts, the possibility exists that such architectural elements were reused.

been built earlier, or in accordance with the construction of northern Rooms 4, 5, and 6 (Figure 2: grey); these later rooms possess their own orientation and corresponding entrances (2 and 3).

The ultimate asymmetry of the structure and the placement of its entrances reflect an incremental building process that demonstrates architectural styles popular in corresponding periods.[44] The identification of the building's phases and attention to their variable orientations demonstrates how conventional was each stage of building for its place and time in North Africa. Though the orientations of the structures vary according to their phases in building, none of the structure's phases align with the "Jewish" eastern designations of Goodenough and Levine.[45] The absence of a baptismal font in the latest phase of the building might mark it differently than some other contemporaneous North African devotional buildings. The plan of the synagogue's structure, however, does not appear to be idiosyncratic at all; it indexes similarity to local devotional architectural practices.

This reassessment of the building largely questions the assertions of Goodenough, Hachlili, and Levine. But what does such an evaluation positively contribute? First, the forms and orientations considered appropriate for devotional construction at Hammam Lif were those

[44] Other column capitals with more definitive Jewish markers have been found elsewhere in North Africa (Cadenat 1979, 257). This indicates that some structures, whether Jewish or Christian, used column capitals with menorot as identity markers. Such capitals also probably suggest the presence of additional buildings which retained particularly "Jewish" uses. No such architectural items, however, were found within the Hammam Lif synagogue itself. Cadenat describes how Gsell ignored the finds of the region of Rouiaha, in his maps of *Atlas Archéologique*. Of the capital engraved with the menorah (257, fig. 13), Cadenat describes "grossier chapiteau rectangulaire de 0,80 × 0,43 m (0,50 × 0,40 m à la base) pour une hauteur de 0,50 simplement décoré sur sa face antérieure et sous une abaque nue épasse de 0,19 m d'un chandelier à sept branches de 0,32 × 0,18 m. Ce motif qui confère au document un intérêt exceptionnel n'avait, semble-t-il, été relevé jusqu'à present sur quelques petits objets mobiliers: disques de lamps de Carthage, d'Hippone; du Maroc (Volubilis, Mogador) ou encore de Graviscae et de Sicile; cachet pour marquer les amphores conservées au musée de Madrid" (1979, 256). Cadenat also discusses the connections between the uses of columns with crosses in buildings which commemorated local saints in areas such as Columnata and Ouekki in Mauretania Tingitana (1979, 250–260). Many of these artifacts were held within the antiquities museum in Oran, though the fate of the menorah column is unknown.

[45] Levine's broader argument about the ancient synagogue depends on attention to similarities among synagogues in the ancient Mediterranean. The imposition of the "eastern" direction on the Hammam Lif synagogue directly relates to his support of that argument (2000, 200).

employed within North Africa generally. There is no need to seek foreign analogy to account for Hammam Lif's plan: it is entirely conventional within its local environment. What Jewish perspectives explain as a "Torah niche" or seat of Moses instead probably served as an apse like those conventionally constructed within Christian basilicas.[46] Second, the possibility of comparing Hammam Lif's devotional space to that of others in its region opens up additional possibilities for speculating about the additional practices that were associated with this structure. Perhaps Hammam Lif's apsidal room was constructed to accommodate activities comparable to those conducted in such similarly and locally constructed spaces in contemporaneous churches. Perhaps, just as other churches of similar periods were connected to broader complexes, in which feasting and other activities took places, so too might have these activities been conducted in the environs of the Hammam Lif synagogue. Local precedent cannot provide definitive proof of related activities, but can furnish plausible suggestions for them.[47]

This chronological approach to the synagogue's plan does not intend to presume unified and continuous use by identical groups. It is possible that the earliest phase of the building was used to enact "pagan" or Christian devotional practices, and that it was only in its later phase of construction and decoration that the building was used specifically as a mosaic-decorated "sinagoga." It remains plausible, furthermore, that the structure sustained concurrent use by groups of multiple votive practices and cultural designations (*contra* Goodenough and Hachlili). By highlighting which other characteristics of the space are locally conventional and unconventional, we can begin to postulate how additional practices at Hammam Lif might relate to the construction of the devotional space that encased them.

III. Mosaic and Decoration: Depicting Devotion in Tile

Both the figurative and inscribed mosaics from Hammam Lif have historically garnered the most attention of all of its components.

[46] Cyprian occasionally describes activities that occurred within the space of the church in several instances (*i.e.*, *Ep.* 70, 71).

[47] Because the site was destroyed, further attempts at excavating its surrounding area would be impossible. Possible discoveries of pottery deposits, in addition to architectural remains, might indicate some degree of proximate habitation or use.

Initially, the French lieutenant who unearthed the complex, Captain Prudhomme, demonstrated the greatest zeal for the capture of these floors; upon their discovery, he immediately ordered his soldiers to remove them from the building (Renan 1883, 157; Biebel 1936, 541). This campaign to remove and eventually sell these mosaics resulted in the destruction of the majority of them. Records do not indicate whether any other figurative mosaics once decorated other areas of the complex.

Those figurative mosaics the military team did not destroy in the process of "preservation" were brought to Lyon in the 1890s (Biebel 1936, 542). The panels were purchased by a jeweler in Toulouse by the name of Schenk (Biebel 1936, 542; Darmon 1994, 7–8), whose estate, in turn, sold them to the Brooklyn Museum in New York (Bleiberg 2006; Biebel 1936, 542). Of the 21 mosaic panels originally sold, only 8 figurative panels from the structure remain in the Brooklyn Museum's collection.[48] Discrepancies exist between the earliest sketches of some of these panels and their present appearance within the Brooklyn archives.[49] A different fate awaited the three inscribed mosaic panels from the synagogue (Gauckler 1928, no. 12a–c = *CIL* 8.12547 a–c). These were brought to Tunis where they are presently housed in the reserves of the Bardo Museum. These mosaics remain cemented to two walls in the storage area of the Bardo.[50] Several figurative and inscribed mosaics appear to have been slightly altered for their display, but no official conservation records exist for this work.[51]

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[48] Only isolated panels of the floor are extant and derive from disparate portions of the mosaic. Icard reported that when he returned to the synagogue building after its initial excavation the foundations had flooded with water and all *in situ* mosaics had been destroyed (1910, clxxiii). As Goodenough concluded, "the site promises little for future digging" (1953, 2.93, n. 144).

[49] Mowat had already noticed some of these changes to the mosaic panels in the nineteenth century (1891, 181). Groups of workers employed to create, replicate, and "fix" mosaics in Lyon may have accomplished their alteration. J.R. Frothington noted in 1898 that the background of some of the mosaic panels had been restored even before they were arranged for display at the Brooklyn Museum (1898, 79). Black tiled borders were permanently affixed to the borders of these figurative panels within the Brooklyn collection. It is unclear when these changes were implemented.

[50] Most of these remain obscured by shelves of large Punic stelai and one wooden Punic sarcophagus. All of the measurements of the inscriptions were made on my own visits to the museum in September and October 2003. One of the figurative panels, which depicts a duck, has been lost within the collection of the Bardo Museum.

[51] Comparisons of early sketches of the floor with the present state of the figurative mosaics demonstrate their restoration. Also see Wharton (2000). Vast quantities of North African mosaics passed through Lyon for sale in the 1880s and 1890s, and

The destruction and dispersal of these mosaics force scholars to rely entirely on old maps and drawings, such as Kaufmann's (1886, 49), for a synthetic understanding of their original design and integration.[52] The careful comparison of the earliest sketches and watercolors with the present state of the extant mosaics enables more responsible interpretations of the mosaics, their possible restorations, and subsequent arguments about their interpretation.[53]

A. *Figurative Representation and Devotional Decoration*

Hammam Lif's decorative mosaic floor demonstrates a varied visual vocabulary and iconography. It also represents the largest preserved surface in the building (9 m × 5.25 m).[54] Both Renan's and Kaufmann's renderings of the carpet largely resemble one another (1883, 1957–163; 1884, 273–275); each depicts panels from the northernmost room (5A) to include geometric foliage designs that encase images of waterfowl and baskets of fruit, and a southernmost carpet (5B), which appears as a vertical slice of the northern motif. The lower central mosaic contains the images of two date palms, birds on the ground with foliage, and a large krater fountain flanked by peacocks (5C; Figures 1, 4). An inscribed mosaic panel, flanked by images of two menorot, separates

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teams of mosaicists created replicas and restored and reassembled those which were brought through France. This phenomenon has been chronicled, but the results of these restorations remain unrecorded.

[52] I will omit extensive discussion of the extra panels found within the Brooklyn Hammam Lif collection here. As Biebel noted as early as 1938, and others such as Darmon have sufficiently indicated, these mosaic panels differ strikingly from the others in the collection and are probably from a nearby Christian basilica. These panels are not being excluded here because they depict human images, but rather because their provenance is clearly distinct. See discussion in Biebel (1938) and Darmon 1994.

[53] Though smaller objects were found on top of the floors within the synagogue, their positions also remain largely undocumented. The Carthage Museum has on display a "writing kit" found in the Naro complex (Pinard 1956), but this object's provenance remains questionable. According to Goodenough, Icard also found 23 menorah lamps in the synagogue precinct in 1909, but the present locations of these lamps are unknown (1953, 2.93, n. 144).

[54] The figurative carpets are best preserved in the slightly differing sketches of Renan (1883, 157–163; 1884, 273–275) and Kaufmann (1886, 45–61): the floors had already been partially destroyed by the time the earliest watercolors and sketches of them were published. 25 panels were originally identified as of Hammam Lif when they were sold at the Hôtel Drouot, Tunis (Frothington 1896, 79; Darmon 1994, 10), though some of these were clearly of distinct origin (Biebel 1936, 549).

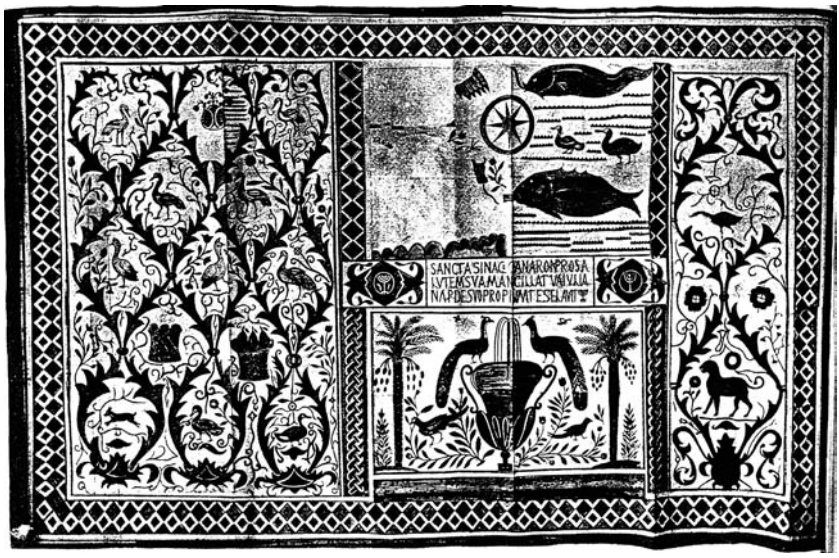

Figure 4. Watercolor of mosaic floor of Naro synagogue, Hammam Lif, Tunisia
Photo: Kaufmann 1886, 48–49

the upper and lower mosaic carpets (Figure 8). The menorah on the left is bordered by objects, while the one on the right appears in isolation. The uppermost central panel of the figurative mosaic is the most unsure and is subject to the diverging records of Kaufmann and Renan. This panel appears to combine nautical and land scenes, though its left side had already been destroyed by the time of its documentation. Kaufmann and Renan record similar nautical scenes on the carpet's left, though their precise depictions of this section differ: Kaufmann renders more extensive images of foliage, the head of a horned ox with a rope in its mouth, and a six-pronged image descending from the panel's upper left (*cf.* Figures 1, 4). The latter image resembles the tail feathers of a bird. Renan's painting is different: it shows less rope extending from the ox's mouth and the pronged descending object contains only four points (Figure 4). No portion of this mosaic's panel remains extant.

Scholars' precise interests in all of these mosaics have shaped their particular interpretations of them. Historians of "Jewish" art have traditionally understood them to depict scenes of creation, salvation (Hachlili 1998, 208), or the collection of the first fruits (Darmon 1994, 25). Still others consider them to depict biblical stories of Leviathan and Behemoth (Goodenough 1953, 2.96; Drewer 1972, 154). Historians of late ancient

and Christian art differently consider them as comparanda for the floors of conventional Christian basilicas (Biebel 1936, 550–551; Duval 1974; Dunbabin 1978, 194–195). Assumptions about the significance of these images, their interpretations, and their most appropriate analogues relate to the contexts of scholars' broader interests in them.

Despite the impossibility of interpreting the *meaning* of these images, it does remain possible to compare their renderings and position in the synagogue to those in other North African devotional buildings. The mosaic's northern and southern panels are the most secure to describe. Yet there appears to be little reason to assume that they depict idiosyncratic images and practices of the Jerusalem temple rather than a conventional local iconography. The mosaic patterns on the far left and right sides of the mosaic include foliage designs, or *xenia*, which encase images of animals and baskets of fruit (Duval 1974, pls. I–III). Similar patterns appear in earlier Roman decoration (Dunbabin 1978, 194, fig. 32), but their pervasive use in other North African basilicas during this time (*e.g.*, Hergla, Dermetch, etc.) is sustained by their immense and continued popularity during later Christian periods (Parrish 1993, 447).[55] Biebel, as well as Duval, noted the extreme similarity between the Naro *xenia* mosaics and those of the church of El-Moussat outside of modern Sfax (Duval 1974, 157–73, fig 12; Figure 4). The close resemblance between the Hammam Lif figures and the others prevents the immediate conclusion that they possess a singularly Jewish meaning or interpretation.

The central panels of the mosaic are more abstracted. They have been susceptible to more creative interpretations than the previous floor. Historians of Jewish art have considered this combination of the upper and lower panels to represent specifically Jewish understandings of paradise and creation (Hachlili 1998, 208; Darmon 1994, 24–6) that include the Biblical figures of Behemoth (or, Leviathan) and Ziz (Drewer 1981, 154; Goodenough 1953, 2.96). Are the mosaics idiosyncratic enough to require such interpretation based on foreign comparison? Must these mosaics necessarily be interpreted as distinctly "Jewish" or "biblical" in these ways?

Contextual examination suggests that these panels, too, could be classified as artistically pedestrian in North Africa. The lower panel, which depicts the date palms, birds, and fountain, is one of the most

[55] Discussions and images of these are preserved within Ghalia (1998, 137).

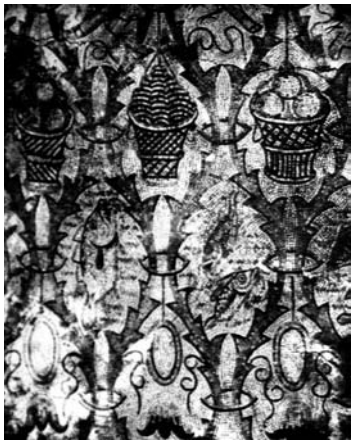

Figure 5. Detail of mosaic floor of Church at El-Moussat, Tunisia
Photo: Duval 1974, 59, fig. 2

conventional motifs in Roman North African art. This motif is so common, in fact, that it could have appeared comfortably in a range of local pagan and Christian contexts, devotional and otherwise.[56] This image is ubiquitous among earlier Roman villas and later churches alike; countless later imperial villas and Byzantine churches, such as those at Mustis, Hergla, and Djemila, depict similar images (Dunbabin 1978, 194–5; Ghalia 1998, 82, fig. 30; Figure 6).[57]

Most other aspects of the mosaics also reflect local convention. The image on the right resembles the nautical scenes so popular in the region for centuries; nautical mosaics from the first century B.C.E. until the third century C.E. were grand and ubiquitous in North Africa, *e.g.*,

[56] A Byzantine Christian image such as this one is famously embedded in the exterior wall of the mosque at the center of the Sfax medina. The faces of the peacocks have since been effaced.

[57] I believe that the ritual objects which are encased in the same mosaic as the left menorah, are products of inaccurate restoration. Wharton (2000, 210) also discusses this probability. Based on clear discrepancies between the images in the the drawings of these mosaics within Delattre (1895), and Biebel (1936), and by viewing the panel presently held in the Brooklyn Museum, it appears that the ambiguous "scroll" and "shofar" implements are false restorations of previous images, possibly an ethrog and a shofar. The original images are unclear. According to Renan, Delattre recognized an alpha and omega flanking them (1883), but this attribution is unsure. Distinct original images would yield correspondingly distinct interpretive ramifications.

Neptune's fountain at Utica.[58] Comparable depictions of water, fish, eels, and fish being caught in nets and by fishermen retained popularity within the mosaics of fifth- and sixth-century Christian churches and basilicas like the mosaic floor of the apse of the Church of Hr Guessira (Figure 6) and that of the El Asnam basilica (Ghalia 1998).

Slightly less common are those mosaics that combine ground and nautical scenes. One mosaic panel from a basilica at Sbeitla (VII), nevertheless, depicts such a scene: it renders a man with a pail who is fishing and standing on a bit of land that emerges from the heavily populated waters. A sea monster with legs stands/swims above his head (Sbeitla VII; Duval 1969; Ghalia 1998, 46). The carpet directly to the south of this panel at Sbeitla appears to contain an image of an ox, standing on a piece of land, but surrounded by fish (Ghalia 1998, 46). Various fifth-century basilicas from eastern Algeria similarly juxtapose marine and land scenes in adjacent mosaic panels. These land scenes usually include cows or oxen, flowers, and plants, *e.g.*, Basilica at Talmen Foust (Ghalia 1998, fig. 15; Duval 1973, 21–28), Hr Guessira I (Figure 6), and Khirbet Guidra (Gsell 1882). Many of these land/sea elements, including land scenes with flowers and oxen, and nautical scenes with fish, resemble that partially preserved at Hammam Lif.[59]

Figure 6. Mosaic floor of apse, Church of Hr Guessira I, Algeria
Photo: *BCAN* I, 2.84.3. Reproduced with permission of Institut d'études augustiniennes

[58] These motifs fill the museums in modern Tunisia, including the Bardo Museum in Tunis. Some of these mosaic images are elaborate, and originally formed parts of floors and fountains. Their effects are dazzling and frequently contained semi-precious stones (*e.g.*, Utique Neptune mosaic). See Aurigemma (1960, table 109) and Foucher (Inv. 5658, pl. XXXVII).

[59] One of the strangest features of the fish panels in the Brooklyn museum is the appearance of objects in the fishes' mouths. This image, too, appears elsewhere, in scenes

Three images within the Hammam Lif mosaic appear to be more regionally unusual than the previous carpets. Two of these are located within the upper mosaic panels that did not survive initial excavation. They are only partly documented in Kaufmann's and Renan's drawings and are, accordingly, more ambiguous to reconstruct and interpret. These include the depictions of the "wheel" and of the pronged object that extends from the top of the mosaic. The wheel is clearly preserved, though the jagged protrusion from the top left of the mosaic is more obscure—in the earlier drawing it appears to have four points (Renan 1884, 157) and the later drawing depicts it with six points (Kaufmann 1886). Subsequent scholars tend to ignore the wheel and label the diagonally descending object as the "hand of God" (Darmon 1994, 24). The resulting image is incomplete and a bit strange—could it depict God's (or an angel of God's) deliberate intervention and creation of land and sea in the remainder of the mosaic panel (Hachlili 1998, 208)?

The obscurity of these images, however, does not merit an automatic conclusion that they are necessarily of Jewish context or explanation. The object described as the wheel resembles an extremely common symbol in earlier Punic iconography that appears commonly on earlier Punico-African epitaphs (Ben Abdallah 1986, figs. 251, 257, 252, 276, 151, 252), later Christian inscriptions (*e.g.*, *Bardo*, fig. 16), and Christian votive architectural elements (*e.g.*, *BCAN* I, 2.2.25.4, Sitifis; Figure 7).[60]

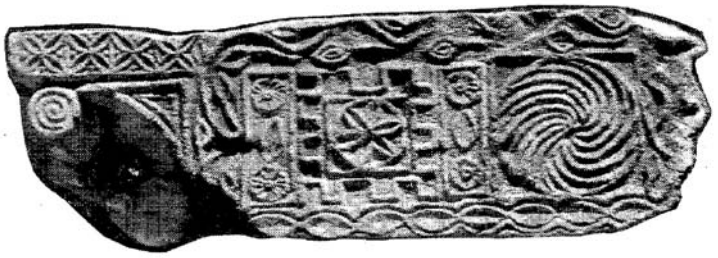

Figure 7. Decorative architectural piece, Sitifis, Algeria
Photo: *BCAN* I, 2.25.4. Reproduced with permission of Institut d'études augustiniennes

where fishermen are catching fish with fishing lines, or where the fish appear to be eating worms (Room VII, Bardo Museum, Tunis, Tunisia).

[60] This image frequently appears above the crescent image that symbolizes the goddess Tanit. A comparable image is considered to be that of one of the instruments used in sacrifice on a Punico-Roman stele (Ben Abdallah 1998, 57, fig. 151); this artifact is probably dated to the first through second centuries C.E.

Its function within the synagogue mosaic is unclear and the image is ambiguous but locally popular.[61] The additional pronged image also remains obscure. Neither of its renderings even depict it with *five* prongs, which might signify the fingers of an actual hand, nor do they record it to resemble any images of a "hand of god" explicitly depicted in "sacrifice of Isaac" motifs in North African art (*cf.* Figure 1, conclusion).[62]

Figure 8. "Sancta Sinagoga" dedicatory mosaic bordered by menorot from Naro synagogue, Hammam Lif, Tunisia
Sketch: Renan 1883, pl. 3

One last idiosyncratic feature of the mosaic, however, is its representation of multiple images of the menorah. Decorative frames encase two menorot that flank both sides of the mosaic inscription. Similarly framed symbols were popular in local mosaics that advertised individuals' euergetism. In the first through third centuries C.E., the symbols of particular families were frequently inserted into decorative lozenges in mosaics that adorned public and devotional spaces. Donors would publicize their gifts by flaunting their family crest, which might consist of symbols, lines, or swastikas, within the horizontal, diamond-shaped designs in this way (*e.g.*, Figure 9; Sfax Museum).

These framed symbols indicated, without words, which families had commissioned the mosaics' donation.[63] Within similar diamond-shaped designs, Christian basilicas frequently inserted comparable geometrical images in addition to Christian symbols (Sbeitla VII, Ghalia 1998).

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[61] One image from a wooden door from late ancient Italy depicts Elijah ascending on a chariot which contains a comparable wheel (Jensen 2000, 92). The position of this wheel is similar to that in the mosaic, but I have found no North Africa analogues for this image.

[62] A related image from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (Boston 1989.690) is treated more thoroughly in the conclusion. Hands of God, or hands of angels of God, are generally depicted as possessing five fingers in representations of *aqeda* scenes from North Africa and elsewhere.

[63] Such symbolization was apparent in donated architecture within Sfax and surrounding the colosseum and gaming complexes in El Djem.

Figure 9. Family crest from mosaic pavement, Sfax Museum, Tunisia
Photo: Author

The horizontal "diamond-shaped" frames in which the Hammam Lif menorot are encased, then, are conventional designs used to highlight important symbols within pagan and Christian decorative and devotional contexts. In the case of Hammam Lif, however, the insertion of the menorah as the highlighted symbol appears to be regionally unusual.[64] The method of encasing and highlighting the menorot within the votive floor is conventional for African treatment of symbols, but the symbols within the designs, the menorot, are unusual within Africa Proconsularis.[65] The vast majority of the mosaic's decorative elements embrace the conventions of North African decorative and devotional practice, but these small symbols simultaneously index difference from local conventions of devotional decoration.

B. *Dedicating Devotional Space*

The three inscriptions within the Hammam Lif mosaics beg slightly different examination than their pictorial counterparts. Each of the texts was cemented into floors of different rooms (1c, 4c, and 5). Their placements and contents indicate their distinct functions at

[64] These particular renderings of menorot might possess specific connotations—perhaps exactly how they were depicted (with a tripod base, with or without flanking symbols) might have indicated which specific family might have commissioned the mosaic, but such possibilities are unsure. Local attestations of the precise designs of framed symbols might suggest this.

[65] Some of these pavements were entirely geometric, or consisted of vegetation motifs, and ranged from elaborate (*Timgad*, *BCAN* I, 2.98.7.4) to simple (Germain 1969; Pl. XVIII–XIX).

Hammam Lif.[66] Unlike the figurative mosaics, whose fates were determined by their prospective sale, these mosaic texts remained within the archives of the Bardo Museum in Tunis. Neither their measurements nor composition analysis might assist understandings of the mosaics' original placement and construction: they are cemented directly into the walls of the museum's basement archive. The inscriptions may have been corrupted to some degree through their transfer and fixation to the wall, but they appear to have been altered significantly less than their figurative counterparts in Brooklyn.[67] The proximity of the present state of these texts to the earliest sketches of them (Renan 1884; Kaufmann 1886) underscores their provisional trustworthiness.[68] Comparisons of these donative inscriptions to others of similar kind, medium, and provenance rely on evaluations of their original placements in the building and the readings of the texts revised. While the Hammam Lif inscriptions appear to be largely intact, the texts' abbreviations and orthographic irregularities complicate their interpretations and analysis.

1. *Dedications and votive titles*

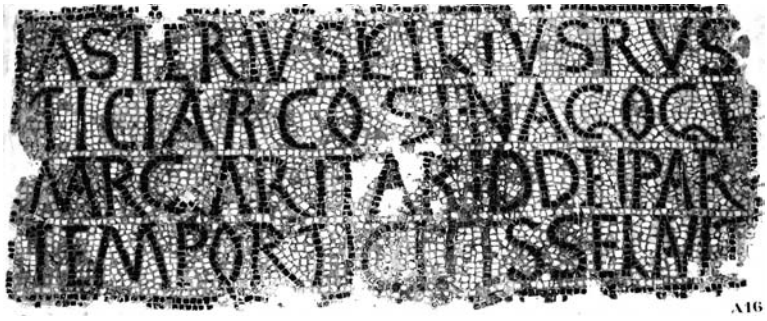

Figure 10. "Asterius" dedicatory mosaic from Naro synagogue, Hammam Lif; Bardo Museum, Tunisia. Photo: Author

[66] The existence of these texts raises the possibility that additional inscriptions may have originally been present in the floors of the building, but did not survive the building's violent excavation.

[67] This was determined by my examination of the mosaics in both the Brooklyn and Bardo museums.

[68] I will note when physical aspects of the texts challenge their accurate interpretation. Dispute about the inscriptions' interpretation began in the ninteenth century. Reinach already critiqued Prudhomme's treatment of the mosaics in 1886 as he noted, "Mais le capitaine, malgré son zèle pour l'archéologie, n'est pas un épigraphiste, et le caporal à ce qu'il semble, n'était pas davantage" (1886, 219–220).

The first of these texts was situated in Room 1 of the synagogue and bordered the entrance to Room 5 (Figure 10). Its construction appears to postdate the third of the building's phases: part of it covered the area once occupied by the northern wall of Room 1. The entire panel measures 1.27 m wide × .59 m high, with average letter heights measuring 11.2 cm × 0.8 cm. The present state of the text nearly exactly resembles the earliest sketches of it. My transcription of the text reads: ASTERIUSFILIUSRUS|TICIARCOSINAGO GI| MARGARITARIDDEIPAR|TEM PORTICI|TESSELAVIT. My reading of the text is: ASTERIUS FILIUS RUSTICI ARCOSINAGOGI MARGARITA RIDDEI PARTEM PORTICI TESSELAVIT (*cf. CIL* 8.12547b).[69]

Scholars' different readings of the text have distinct implications for the interpretation of the synagogue and the status of the Jews who funded its decoration. For example, J. P. Darmon has transcribed this text to read ASTERIUS FILIUS RUSTICI ARCOSINAGOGI MARGARITARI DDEI PARTEM PORTICI TESSELAVIT, and translates the text to read, "Asterius son of Rusticus the archosinagogus, the jeweler, tessellated part of the portico of the 'House of God' (Domus Dei)."[70] Vössing also follows this reading (1996, 1183–1193). Both, then, replace "Margarita Riddei" with "Margaritari DDEI." Certainly, this interpretation accounts for the singular verb ("tesselavit"), but it also depends on the rendering of the word "Margaritari" to indicate that the father of Asterius was a jeweler by occupation. Part of Darmon's justification for his division of the words and reading is that this spelling of "Riddeus" is "absolutely not" attested within the North African onomasticon (1994, 19). Vössing's additional justification, that ancient North African Jews, just as those who followed them in modernity, frequently occupied themselves as jewelers, also grounds his agreement with Darmon's interpretation (1996, 192). As a result of these word divisions, Darmon

[69] This follows closely the *CIL* reading of the text: ASTRIUS, FILIUS RUS|TICI ARCOSINAGOGI| MARGARITA (*puella*?) RIDDEI PAR|TEM PORTICI| TESSELAVIT (8.1247b). The letter following the name *Asterius*, combines the letters "M" and "A" for *Margarita*. No crossbar completes the second "A" of *Margarita*. Le Bohec reads this name as being that of the *wife*, but not *daughter,* of Riddeus. Renan reads: "Margaritar(i) Iodei" (the jeweler, the Jew) daughter of Riddeus (1883, 157). Presumably, in this case, he renders differently the "Ri" of *Riddei* as "Io."

[70] Though *margaritarius* is conventionally translated as "pearl-seller," this is my translation of Darmon's French translation of his reading of the Latin.

understands the following letters, "D. Dei" to signify the characterization of the synagogue as a *Domus Dei*—a term frequently employed to describe Christian votive spaces (1994, 19–21).[71]

Though the use of the phrase *Domus Dei* would not be implausible in this context, Darmon's justification for rendering these words in this way is questionable. Darmon's argument depends upon the lack of precedent for the name "Riddeus," though evidence for a "Ridaeus" and "Ridai" are present in North African, "pagan" prosopographies (Ben Abdallah 1983, 42, no. 1477; *CIL* 8.27173). Riddeus is an attested name throughout Roman North Africa—as reviewed in chapter three, it is actually a common name, regardless of orthographic variation (*e.g.*, *CIL* 8. 22758; 27173; 27309). Second, Darmon's rendering of the letters to read "margaritari" is unprecedented in comparable donative inscriptions in North Africa. Devotional inscriptions from this region rarely include the professional occupations of their dedicants. Darmon's imposition of word divisions to support the reading of "margaritari" appears mostly to be supported by chauvinisms about Jewish continuity and uniformity, which are also supported by Vössing (1996). The addition of this occupational title to the previous modifying phrase to describe Asterius's father appears superfluous, but, more importantly, the dependence of this argument on anachronistic understandings of the normative occupations of Tunisian Jews is problematic. Though *Domus Dei* might be a possible rendering for the synagogue's title, the implausibility of Darmon's and Vössing's readings preclude the evidence for the use of this term here.

My reading of the text is somewhat different, therefore, and more closely resembles the earlier *CIL* reading: ASTERIUS FILIUS RUSTICI ARCOSINAGOGI MARGARITA RIDDEI PARTEM PORTICI TESSELAVIT (*CIL* 8.12547b). This rendering translates to "Asterius son of Rusticus the synagogue leader (*archosinagogus*), and Margarita, daughter/wife of Riddeus, tessellated part of the portico." While this transcription describes Asterius's and Margarita's collective tessellation of the mosaic, it certainly cannot account for certain of the inscription's idiosyncrasies. First, my reading divides words in the text without regard

[71] One alternate possibility, is that the abbreviation *D. Dei* might stand for "gift of God." That reading, however, remains problematic for reasons I outline above.

for the line breaks in the actual inscription; I impose the division of *Margarita* and *Riddei* accordingly. This judgment responds to the conventions of North African epigraphy where such texts rarely provide spaces between words to clarify word separation. Second, my reading preserves two subjects that correspond with a singular verb. This text, like many other vulgar Latin inscriptions in the region, indicates little awareness of "classical" Latin verbal structures; verbs in later North African inscriptions frequently disagree with the number of their subjects.[72] The ascription of Margarita's association with *Riddeus*, her father, or husband, is an onomastic convention for women. The record of this relationship (Margarita to her father) parallels that of Asterius' with his father, Rusticus.[73]

The title of "synagogue leader" here is mirrored in titles conferred to others in North African epitaphs, including two allocations of the title "pater sinagogae" (Le Bohec nos. 74, 79) further west in Sitifis and Volubilis. The title this Hammam Lif inscription mentions ("archosynagogus"), appears to be related to the previous two. Like the other two attested offices, this term describes an office in a devotional hierarchy, which incorporates the word synagogue into the title.[74] The term synagogue is of Greek origin, but the other two texts supply the Latin word for "father" into the synagogue titles. This title at Hammam Lif preserves an office that fully transliterates the Greek title of *archosynagogos*, which is otherwise unattested in North Africa, but is allocated in commemorative and devotional contexts in Palestine, Rome, Asia Minor,

[72] For additional discussion of such patterns, see Reinach (1886, 218).

[73] A distinct possibility is that Margarita is actually the mother of Asterius, and that this inscription attributes the donation by Asterius and provides the name of his father, his mother, and his mother's patriline. Despite the fact that Margarita is not a genitive form (as is Riddeus), could this inscription also provide information about both of Asterius' parents? In this case, Asterius would be the single donor. The explicit inclusion of two donors in the second mosaic might imply that, in this case, two donors were also commemorated. Also, little local precedent exists for such doubled parental attribution in inscriptions. According to Ross Kraemer's reading of comparable inscriptions (where a woman's name is followed by the genitive form of a masculine name) this inscription would read "daughter of" the bearer of the masculine name. See Kraemer 2004, 163; also *oral communication*. The possibility that Asterius and Margarita were somehow related does make sense—they did, after all, fund the tessellation of a mosaic in tandem.

[74] These types of titles that incorporate the word for synagogue differ from other devotional titles within North African Jewish inscriptions, such as *presbuteressa* (Le Bohec no. 4) and *rabbi* (Le Bohec no. 80).

and elsewhere. Pan-Mediterranean Jewish, rather than local analogies, furnish precedent for the use of this term in a devotional context.[75]

The subsequent reading of the text possesses specific ramifications for the interpretation of Jewish donative practices in Naro. First, it indicates the importance of publicly commemorating one's gift in a devotional space. Even though Asterius and Margarita commissioned only *part* of the portico to be tessellated, their act still merited inscription.[76] Additionally, women, just as men, may have donated within this organizational framework. Last, the title of "synagogue leader" appears as an important and unusual one—so much so that even Rusticus's son Asterius, who did not bear the title himself, mentioned his father's possession of the title in his own dedicatory inscription (Darmon 1994, 21–24). It is unclear what other of the titles might have been associated with the synagogue at Hammam Lif, but inclusion of the title *archisynagogos* indicates that some organizational structure was established for the synagogue's constituents.[77]

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[75] Mosaic inscriptions in basilicas and churches occasionally include devotional titles of the individuals who donated mosaics, but most frequently in the increasingly common medium of funerary mosaic.

[76] Compare an inscription from Dougga that is restored to read "in nomen Dei/ et in nomen marturoru(m)/Exupius reddit votum/hunc port[i]cu[m basilicae]/[Suis sumptib]u[s extruxit?]" (*Bardo*, no. 77).

[77] Funerary inscriptions from elsewhere include comparable votive titles. One text from Sitifis in Mauretanian Sitifensis, commemorates the daughter of a man who was a *pater sinagogae* (*M. Avilius Ianuarius, pater sinagogae*; Le Bohec no. 74). Unlike the previous title, this one is a combination of Latin and Greek terminology where in the word *singagoga* is modified by a Latin title. This epithet may or may not have been imported wholesale from elsewhere. No evidence has indicated the presence of a synagogue building in Mauretanian Sitifensis, but presumably *Avilius Ianuarius* would be "pater" of a local synagogue; this is the only evidence for the possibility of a synagogue in the Sitifan region. Another Greek inscription from Volubilis, in nearby Mauretanian Tingitana, marks the grave of a certain Καικιλιανὸς ὁ προτοπολίτες πατῆρ τῆς συναγωγῆς τῶν Ιουδέων or, "first citizen, father of the synagogue of the Jews" (Le Bohec no. 79). Part of this title, father of the synagogue, has a very similar sense to the previous one. This man, however, bears an additional title of προτοπολίτες and the epitaph explicitly marks this synagogue, in which he presumably held office, as being a synagogue of the Jews. Whether mention of this is redundant, or whether he is differentiating between this synagogue of the Jews, as opposed to that of another population, is unclear. The phase elsewhere can mean something like the "community of the Jews/Judeans." The possible ascription of devotional titles to women reflects local Punic and Roman practice of permitting female priest and cult officials, but archaeological evidence does not appear to attest women's offices similarly in the African Church. Nonetheless, the titles used to describe North African Jewish officials accord with titles conferred outside of North Africa in dedications and epitaphs from Asia Minor and Palestine. The

2. *Sacred Space and Salvation through Donation*

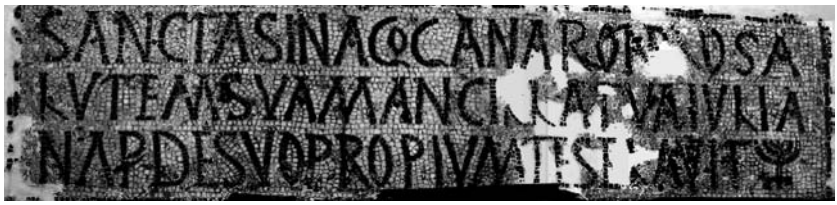

Figure 11. "Sancta Sinagoga" dedicatory mosaic from Naro synagogue. Hammam Lif; Bardo Museum, Tunisia. Photo: Author

A second text, discovered in Room 5, provides another example of terminology used to describe the synagogue. The text separates the central panels and has drawn the most attention of all the mosaic panels components (*CIL* 8.12457a). It measures 1.94 m × .53 m, with average letter heights of 12.7 cm × 7.4 cm (Figure 11). I transcribe the text as follows: SANCTASINAGOGANARONPROSA|LUTEMSUAM ANCILLATUAIULIA|NAPDESUOPROPIUMTESELAVIT (*menorah*). The word "teselavit" is followed by an image of a menorah, which measures 13.5 cm high, 12.5 cm across the top, and 6.0 cm across its tripod base.[78] The *CIL* reading of the text follows: SANCTA(m) SINAGOGA(m) NARON(itanam) PRO SALUTEM SUAM ANCILLA TUA JULIA/NA P(uella) DE SUO PROPRIUM TESELAVIT (*CIL* 8.12457a).

Certain problems beset the *CIL* transcription and its resulting interpretation. Is "sancta singagoga" really a direct address or an objective one? Does Julia(na)'s donation impact her salvation, or the synagogue's? Other problems of symbolization and orthography complicate this interpretation further. After all, what is the diagonal line that cuts below the crossbar of the P (rendered here as P)? What is the resulting symbol or abbreviation and how does the marker affect the inscription's syntax? Furthermore, what is a "propium" and is the *CIL* reading as

vocabulary of synagogue hierarchy, while locally unusual, has antecedents elsewhere in the Mediterranean.

[78] Le Bohec translates the text as "La sainte synagogue de Naro, c'est, pour son salut, to servante Juliana de P(tolemaista) qui en a fait faire le pavement de mosaïque à ses frais." He explains that "peut-être faut-il voir là une ligature de P er T, et le début d'un *origo: Ptolemais* nous remènerait à la Syrie-Palestine comme Tiberiade (no. 28) mais il n'y a là rien de sûr" (1981a, 178).

"prop(r)ium" justifiable? Despite the reasonable preservation of the text, these ambiguities challenge its interpretation.

Several of this inscription's idioms suggest initial similarities to other donative inscriptions from the region. The first such indication is its description of the synagogue space as "sancta." "Sancta" is traditionally used as an appropriate adjective to describe qualities particular to deities, exceptional people, and buildings within North Africa.[79] Certain funerary inscriptions, such as one from Mauretania Caesariensis, similarly describes a basilica as a sacred space; one epitaph commemorates the deceased within a "sancta basilica," which the deceased had edified during his life.[80] Records of *sanctae ecclesiae* are attested similarly in inscriptions, such as those in Orléansville, Algeria (*CIL* 8.9710; Diehl 1580; *HD* 028192). *Sancta/us* classifies space dedicated to and appropriate for deity in North Africa.

The precise meaning of "sancta" in the Hammam Lif inscription, as in other instances of the word's use in similar contexts, is more difficult to isolate. North African Christian authors occasionally articulate what qualities "sancta" denotes. When they employ the term to designate ritual spaces, however, they usually do so in polemical contexts to differentiate between proper and improper worship (*e.g.*, Cyprian, *Ep.* 70.1.2.8, 71.2.3.44; Quodvultdeus, *Serm. 1, Symb.* I.13.1, *Serm. 2, Symb.* II.4.80, *Acced. ad grat.* I.2.13, *Lib. prom. praed* 2.17.28). Cyprian's and Quodvultdeus's related explications—that a place that is "sancta" is one that is free from improper worship and uncleanness—suggest some possibilities about the word's use, but cannot be considered to be wholly representative of all North African considerations of the concept.[81] The

[79] Multiple votive inscriptions from Numidia indicate the extent to which the word was used as an attribute in pagan dedications to specific gods such as "deae sanctae fortunae" (Lambaesis, Numidia: *HD* 029265; 019664), Minerva (*HD* nos. 011795, 026673), or, to Christian martyrs (*Bardo*, figs. 19, 31, 21, 36). During the Christian period, the use of the word begins to shift to describe the remains and the buildings that encased the remains of commemorated martyrs throughout North Africa.

[80] "*Mem(oria) Constantinae filiae dom(ini) / gl(oriosi) Maurici mag(istri) m(i)l(itum) qui (a)edificia / circumlapsa div(isa) in hanc s(an)c(t)a basi/lica restauravit in / pace ann(o) III die K(a)l(endas) Nob(emb)r(es)(!) ind(ictione) VIIII (Diehl 2346).*" Only due to letter spacings is this text presumably read as "sancta" as opposed to "sacra." Also see the vocabulary of comparable basilica donations (Diehl 1842).

[81] While many inscriptions repeat the phrase *Sancta basilica* the earlier texts of Cyprian and Quodvultdeus frequently repeat the phrase "sancta ecclesia" to describe the sanctity of the church, which may only be maintained through the banishment

exact sense of "sancta" at Hammam Lif might accord with Cyprian's, or Quodvultdeus' uses, but such speculations are unverifiable.

The title associated with Iulia(na), "ancilla," provides the next interpretive challenge. From the outset, it appears unclear whether the term "ancilla" refers to Iulia(na)'s status in society as a servant or a slave, or whether it labels a place, or office, she occupies in the synagogue's hierarchy. Earlier Roman North African epitaphs occasionally added to names titles such as *ancilla*, *verna*, and *serva* to mark the diminutive status of the deceased.[82] During these periods, titles of servitude clearly designated those with lower social and economic status.

Connotations of servitude only began to shift in the third century, after Roman citizenship had become more inclusive and Christian ideologies had grown increasingly popular; servitude changed from an undesirable social status, in many cases, into a desirable spiritual state.[83] Popular Christian doctrine exalted servile relationships to deity (Martin 1990, 2–9) and devotional titles reflected this perspective. Widespread adoption of titles and names in the church that denoted servitude to deity, in North Africa and elsewhere, reflected this new glorification of subservience.[84] Women, as well as men, adopted these titles: in late antiquity, those who dedicated themselves to a life of asceticism were frequently labeled as *ancillae dei*, servant women of God (Petersen 1996, 90–99).[85] Which type of servitude informs the allocation of the title "ancilla" at Hammam Lif?

First, the Hammam Lif reference is quite late—probably from the sixth century. Attributions of "ancilla" in contemporaneous inscriptions most often connote appropriate servitude to deity. Second, it appears doubtful that "ancilla" is a literal status designation—it would be unusual for a slave to be able to afford such an exceptional dedication within

of adultery (Cyprian, *Ep.* 73. 11.2.186) and the expulsion of idols (Quodvultdeus, *Lib. prom. praedi. Dei* 2.17.28).

[82] This form is used frequently to identify the tombs of actual slaves and servants from Roman estates in Algeria (*CIL* 8.24845).

[83] Dale Martin provides one useful discussion of this, especially for earlier periods (1990).

[84] This transformation of notions of status in Africa, of course, also related of particularisms of pre-existing Punic, Libyan and Roman African practices and understandings.

[85] For additional studies of the scriptural and epigraphic manifestations of such understandings, see discussions in Kraemer (2004).

the synagogue building.[86] The ascription of her servitude (*your* servant, "ancilla tua") appears to be a favorable title for one who is serving by her works.[87] One question remains: does *ancilla* describe a standard office in a synagogue hierarchy, or does it classify, rather, a particular and direct relationship between Julia(na) and God?

The last features of the inscription that might clarify the title "ancilla" relate to the text's grammatical irregularities. The obscurity of the text's orthography forces greater reliance on local epigraphic conventions than on case endings within the text itself. The phrases "sancta sinagoga," and "ancilla tua," for example, are rendered identically to word forms in the nominative, ablative, or vocative cases. "Sancta sinagoga" remains unmarked with accusative case endings, but the dropping of accusative nasal endings becomes common in vulgar or late Latin inscriptions from North Africa and elsewhere during this period. Based on this convention, I suggest that "sancta sinagoga" is actually the object of Iuliana's gift. "Ancilla tua Iulia(na)," then, most probably forms the nominative subject of the inscription. If the inscription begins by describing a dedication to the "sancta[m] sinagoga[m]," the following mention of "tua" might refer to the previously identified *sinagoga*.

While the grammatical form of "ancilla" is clearer, its precise meaning remains obscure. The local popularity of the title *ancilla tua* in Christian communities furnishes the only comparison for the term's use at Naro—Jewish inscriptions from the Mediterranean exclude this as an institutional title. Connotations most common in local Christian references to *ancillae*, then, might usefully inform the title's sense here. Perhaps, this title could ascribe to Iulia(na) the favorable status of

[86] Additional studies have identified the degree to which, during the Christian period, traditional pagan vocabulary was inverted. See discussions within Brown (1972).

[87] Another possibility remains that "tua" could refer to God, according to analogies with Christian titles (*e.g.*, *ancilla dei*). Inscriptions from Italy and Africa describe similarly titled women as "ancilla dei," (Diehl 1465, 1465A, 1467). One inscription from Mauretania Tingitana describes an "Aurelia Sabina ancilla Cresti" [Aurelia Sabina, servant of Christ], and another describes a "*Crementia, ancillae (sic) [chi rho]*" which appears to imply that Cremetia is a servant of Christ (Diehl 1470). Another addresses an "ancillae tua[e…]" in an epitaph (Diehl 3871). A development of a specifically North African understanding or use of the term might be helpful. Additionally, it would be instrumental to know whether North African Jews might be reading scripture in Latin and whether *Ancilla Dei* might connote a specific idea within this context particularly. Within the Vulgate, "ancilla" is a term applied to Ruth and Judith as well as to other women (e.g., *Vulg Rt.* 2.9).

woman-servant of God, as well as of the synagogue itself.[88] Christian references to the term can only suggest ranges of possibilities for the title's use in this inscription.

The dedication "pro salutem suam" also possesses conventional meanings within African pagan and Christian contexts. This phrase, too, includes an error in the Latin—the accusative form ("salutem suam") replaces the anticipated ablative case for this construction, *i.e., pro salute sua*. The sentiment, which describes the purpose of Iulia(na)'s donation, however, is common in donative inscriptions in other devotional buildings in North Africa. In earlier periods the phrase commonly announces the benefits of dedicating votives to the divinized Roman emperors or to other gods (*pro salute imp. Caes. P. licinii…., ILT* 1416). In other later texts from the fourth to sixth centuries, however, the phrase more explicitly describes the benefits of making a dedication at a devotional center, such as a basilica. A donative inscription from Mauretania Sitifensis, for example, resembles this Hammam Lif text most closely in this respect: FL • INNO | CENTIUS NUM | PRO SALUTE SUA SUORUM | QUE OMNIUM TESSELAVIT (*CIL* 8.8629; "Fl(avius) Innocentius both for his health/salvation and that of all his [relatives/possessions] tessellated this [commissioned this mosaic]").[89] This text, like Iulia(na)'s, ascribes the benefit of *salus* to Flavius Innocentius upon his commission of the mosaics' tessellation.

Even if the use of the word "salus" in the Hammam Lif mosaic dedication is conventional in this context, what does it mean here?[90] Does it accord with its connotations during the earlier principate, wherein

[88] A second mosaic from the synagogue complex, which describes *Istrumenta servi tui Naritanus/Istrumenta [se]r[ui] tui Naroni* repeats, but does not elucidate, the sense of this direct address. Darmon reads this mosaic as a burial marker for old biblical scrolls within the synagogue complex (1994, 23). Though it appears to be possible that the "sancta sinagoga" is actually similarly addressed in the vocative, and that Iulia(na) is called a servant of the place itself, the alternative interpretation is preferred here.

[89] One inscribed text from the oasis of Sidi-Okba in the region of ancient Numidia, reads: DEO/Invicto| M MeSSIVS| MESSOR| PRAEF CO| *PRO SUA SA|LUTE ET SUORUM* DENVO |CONSTITIVIT (*CIL* 2483: "for the health of him and his"). It is unclear to what epoch this text belongs, though is probably dated to the late third or early fourth centuries.

[90] The CIL reading of one comparable devotional text from Mauretania Caesariensis reads: *Aream at sepulchral cultor verbi contulit| et cellam stru[x]it suis cunctis sumptibus eclesiae sanctae hanc reliquit memoriam. |Salve[t]e, fratres, puro corde et simplici|Euelpius uos [salu]to sanctu spiritu. |Eclesia fratruum hunc restituit titulum*. This text commemorates a person who has dedicated to a sacred building for the "salus" of others, and subsequently details the exact decorative activities that Euelpius sponsored (Diehl 1583; *CIL* 8.9585, 20958).

salus generally describe "health"—a benefit alongside "fortune"? Alternatively, might it correspond with later uses in Christian contexts that relate to the possibility of afterlife. During the Christian period, *salus* shifts from a designation of bodily health to that of cosmic well-being or salvation.[91] Though the phrase *pro salute sua* is commonly attested in both pagan and Christian contexts, the precise meaning of the word "salus" at Hammam Lif remains unclear.[92] The late date and comparable vocabulary place the mosaic within the context of Christian, rather than imperial Roman, interpretations of "salus." It appears that the most appropriate reading for the phrase, then, is *for her salvation*. The use of these terms therefore raises possibilities about operative understandings of life and afterlife through associated practices at Naro.[93]

The interpretation of the word "propium" (*CIL, prop[r]ium*) poses the next challenge. Darmon has largely looked to pan-Mediterranean contexts to interpret the word; he asserts that is previously unattested in Latin texts. Darmon argues that the irregular orthography of "propium" suggests that that the word serves as a Latin transliteration of a Greek term, *propion*. He posits that the oracular and prophetic connotations of *propion* substantiate connections between the Hammam Lif inscription and the "paradisiaque" and "messianique" images in the decorative mosaics (1994, 21, 22).[94] Darmon's interpretation

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[91] Cyprian connects "salus" directly to baptism, and states that "salus" is not possible outside the church. "Quod si haeretico nec baptisma publicae confessionis et sanguinis proficere ad *salutem* potest, quia *salus* extra ecclesiam non est, quanto magis ei nihil proderit, si in latebra et in latronum spelunca adulterae aquae contagio tinctus non tantum peccata antiqua non exposuerit, sed adhuc potius nova et maiora cumulaverit?" (*Ep*. 73). Quodvultdeus decrees an "eternal" *salus* before all: "Venit mirabiliter, exhibuit multa miracula, quae superius commemoravimus, *salus* aeterna multis praestitit *salutem*" (*Serm.*, *Sym*. I, 7, 27).

[92] *Salus* may be invoked for a building, or for those who congregate or dedicate within it. In one inscription, the donor gives "for <u>your</u> (vos) health/salvation, a holy church" (*CIL* 8. 20958, see previous, n. 91). Another text, from Tellergma, Numidia, also exemplifies this: it begins with a dedication "In nomine D(omi)ni D(e)i IH(es)u XP(Christ)i D(e)I et salvatoris nos[tri]" (*HD* 012589). This collective dedication is made for "our salvation." The sense of "vos saluto" and "salvatoris nostri" appear to differ from the sense of "pro salutem suam" in texts designated as pagan. In his notes to the first text, Diehl draws attention to *Vulg. Rom.* 16.22 "saluto vos…in domino" and *Phil. (4.21)* "salutate omnem sanctum in Christo Iesu."

[93] One might surmise that if the word carried popular meanings that were uncomfortable for contemporaneous Jews, they would not have employed them at all, or at the very least, employed them with explicit modification.

[94] Darmon reads the text: SANCTA SINAGOGA NARON(itana) PRO SALUTEM SUAM ANCILLA TUA JULIA NAR(onitana) DE SUA PROPIUM TESELAVIT and translates "sainte synagogue de Naro, pour son salut ta servante Julia, de Naro,

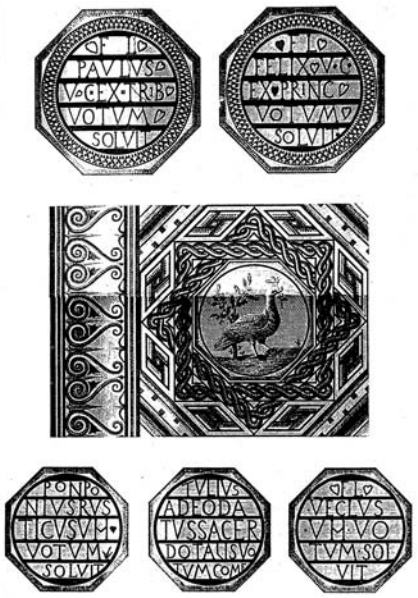

Figure 12. Dedicatory mosaic from Church at Djemila
Photo: Duval 1992, fig. 27.1. Reproduced with permission of Institut d'études augustiniennes

is novel and supports particular readings of the figurative mosaics and notions about the possibly eastern Mediterranean practices of euergetism that the Jewish population in Naro deliberately indexed. But does the phrase "de suo propium" appear to be so regionally unattested that it requires explication through eastern Greek analogues (1994, 21)?

Pervasive irregularities of spelling and case endings in this inscription encourage a wholly skeptical approach toward connections between the inscription's orthography and its interpretation. The phrase "de suo propium" exhibits the same irregularities of orthography and grammar as the rest of this inscription. The phrase, for example, should be properly rendered in the ablative case (*i.e., de suo propio*), but only the "suo" retains its appropriate ablative ending. Awareness of these

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à ses frais, a fait réaliser en mosaïque le *propium*" (199, 21). He asks "Qu'est-ce qu'un *propium*? Là gisait la seule véritable difficulté. Le mot ne figure dans aucun dictionnaire de latin. Tout simplement parce que c'est du *grec*. Le mot *propion* est donné par les lexicographes Photius et Suidas, avec le sens de prophétie, oracle. Ce que *Julia* a fait faire en mosaïque, c'est l'image qui accompagne l'inscription, represéntations paradisiaque évocatrice de la promesse messianique (Darmon 1994, 21).

orthographic irregularities, too, should inform the interpretation of the word "propium" itself.

Idiomatic language of donation is employed at Naro and at other North African devotional spaces, such as contemporaneous North African basilicas and churches. The phrase "votum solvit" frequently identifies the motivation for individuals' dedications in basilicas and churches—these dedications are made in fulfillment of a vow (Ghalia 1998, 69; Figure 12). Other North African texts, however, commonly describe donations as deriving from a person's *proprium*, or private coffers (*de suo proprio*), particularly in devotional contexts (*e.g., CIL* 8.11139; *BE* 95.135; *AE* 1934, 0041). Though the precise orthography of Iulia(na)'s "propio" is unattested, the phrase is pervasive enough in comparable donative contexts to substantiate its reading as "prop[r]io" here. Darmon's preference for foreign explication of the word, in this case, appears unjustifiable. Just as the orthography within Naro's mosaics is internally inconsistent ("teselavit" for *tesselavit*; "istrumenta" for *instrumenta*), it is equally probable that "propium" is simply an irregular spelling of "proprium." This text demonstrates idioms of local Latin donative traditions, rather than far-flung Mediterranean ones.

The last questionable aspects of the inscription relate to the exact name of the dedicant and to the P̲ symbol that follows her name. Le Bohec interprets the symbol P̲ as an abbreviation of the intitial two letters, P(t), of the patronymic or toponymic *Ptolemaensis*. This separates the letters to render the name of the dedicant as "Iuliana P(*tolemensis*)."[95] Le Bohec's reading supports postulations about African Jews' origins in the Greek east, but there is no local precedent for an abbreviation to be denoted in this particular way. This reading, therefore, remains untenable.

But how should the P̲ symbol be interpreted, and does the personal name of the dedicant relate to this ligature? One aspect of Le Bohec's suggestion appears reasonable—the P̲ symbol could serve as an abbreviation of a cognomen or an additional word. Abbreviations of words in Latin epigraphy are exceedingly common—in the earliest inscriptions of the Republic, abbreviations facilitated the most efficient communication of information in the allotted space. The letter "P" frequently

[95] In a conversation about this text, John Bodel has suggested that this might be an abbreviation for a cognomen, such as *Napê*. This name is relatively unattested in this region, but the reading appears to be otherwise plausible—Iulia is a locally popular name, while Iuliana is not; this alignment would encourage a related interpretation that reads the unique name as Julia, rather than Juliana.

abbreviates longer words in Latin epitaphs, such as *pia*, *puella* (*e.g., CIL* 8.20182), and *prima* (*e.g., CIL* 8.9433, 24629). The P symbol with the diagonal crossbar, however, is regionally unusual for an abbreviation. The shape of the letter's capital does not even resemble the other P's rendered in the remainder of the same inscription.

Another possibility is that the symbol echoes the emphasis exhibited in this and the following inscription from Naro that repeatedly identifies the synagogue (*sinagoga Naron*) and its objects (*istrumenta Naritanus*) as "of Naro". This symbol might, in this case, facilitate a toponymic abbreviation, to emphasize Iulia's Naronitanian origin and to render her name as Iulia, not Iuliana, of Naro.[96] Lack of precedent for this type of abbreviation and the use of a terminal P (NA<u>P</u> as opposed to NA<u>R</u>) detracts from this reading.

One last possibility remains to compare the <u>P</u> symbol with its most common local analogue: the closest and most regionally pervasive use of a comparable symbol is the Christian symbol of the chi rho ligature (*CIL* 8, suppl. 5, pt. 3, 306). While chi rho symbols are frequently accompanied by additional symbols, such as renderings of an alpha and an omega, these additional symbols are not included in all related images. Chi rho symbols, too, occasionally appear in the middle of inscribed texts as well as on their peripheries (*e.g.*, *Bardo*, nos. 95, 30, 92, 95). The pervasiveness of this symbol in public devotional contexts, as well as in churches and basilicas, might suggest, at the very least, that this rendering of the symbol in the sixth-century synagogue of Naro would be recognizable as such—it remains the most prominent Christian symbol in Africa in the fourth through sixth centuries (Figure 13). Is this rendering, too, a reference to a chi rho that might mimic the placement of the menorah at the end of the text? This remains the most plausible iconographic analogue for the image here—this adjustment would require the adaptation of the word "Iuliana," rather than "Iulia" as the mosaic's dedicant. The comparison between the <u>P</u> and the chi rho, however, cannot yield any definitive conclusion. Certain aspects of this inscription appear common to Christian cultic milieus, but there remains no indication why this would *necessarily* be a chi rho, rather than another type of abbreviation.

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[96] For my favor of the reading of Iulia, rather than Iuliana for the dedicant's name, see previous note. See discussion of such "local" toponymics in chapter three. The argument for Julia's name might also be supported by the placement of "na" in a separate line, though other words in the inscription, *e.g.*, "sa|lutem," are comparably separated by lines of the inscription.

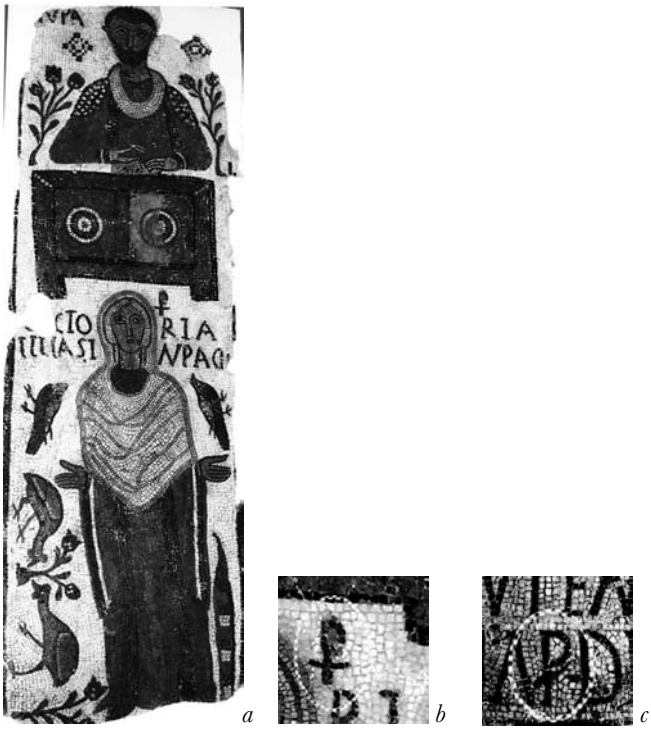

Figure 13. Mosaic tomb of Victoria Elias (a); detail of chi rho in Vicotia Elias' tomb decoration (b); detail of P symbol in Naro mosaic inscription; Bardo Museum, Tunisia. Photos: Author

The P symbol in the Naro mosaic, then, ultimately remains obscure. It may represent an abbreviation of a family name, or of a toponymic. It might, alternatively, represent the insertion of a prevalent Christian symbol into the text itself. My tentative reading of the text does not preclude any of these possibilities.

My final transcription of the text incorporates the preceding contextual and local probabilities: *Sancta[m] Sinagoga[m] Naron pro salut[e] su[a] ancilla tua Iulia NaP de suo prop[r]i[o] tesselavit*, "Your servant Iulia NaP tiled (this mosaic) for the sacred synagogue of Naro, for the sake of her salvation, from her own coffers." First, the text describes the dedicant, Julia *NaP*, as *your* servant (*ancilla tua*), who has made the dedication of the mosaic to the synagogue of Naro for a specific reason—*pro salutem suam*—for her salvation. Last, it specifies that she has made the donation from her own private funds—her *prop(r)io*. This reading of the inscription emphasizes the sanctity of synagogue building and the everlasting benefits conferred to those who dedicate to it.

Despite the difficulties in the text's interpretation, certain of its implications for understanding the relationships between donors, the synagogue's space, and the benefits of donation remain clear. The synagogue's space is differently designated and set apart as "sancta." A woman, who possesses a title of servant of the synagogue, or of deity, made the dedication from her own funds to pay for the tessalation of the synagogue's mosaic. The most appropriate expressions for this inscription are the donative formulae common in the region. The mode of exchange is identified—Julia deliberately makes the donation to a sacred place for an unequal exchange—she tessellates the floor as "your servant," and receives salvation in return.[97] The symbol of the P, and the precise personal name of the dedicant remain obscure, but other of the text's features are clear—local Roman African pagan and Christian idioms inform the language of devotional practice in this inscribed panel.

3. *Votive I(n)struments*

Figure 14. Mosaic inscription for the "I[n]strumenta" at the Naro synagogue; Bardo Museum, Tunisia. Photo: Author

[97] More extensive catalogues attest to these formulas in pan-Mediterranean Jewish and non-Jewish corpora (*i.e.*, Lifshitz 1967).

One last mosaic text suggests the integration of dedicatory and devotional practices within the synagogue. This panel (*CIL* 8.12547c) measures 71 cm high × 77 cm wide and a 4 cm border runs along the mosaic's left side. A white background runs around the texts and is bisected lengthwise by a black line through the mosaic's center (35 cm from the left side of the panel, 33 cm from its right). Irregularly shaped black and white stones compose the text and its geometric outline. Its average letter heights measure 9.8 cm high × 5.2 cm wide.

Two mosaic texts are inset in the remainder of the two rectangular subdivisions (Figure 14). My transcription of the text is: (*left*) ISTRU|MENTA|SERVI|TUINA| RITANUS| (*right*) ISTRU|MENT A|.....|.UINA|RONI. The *CIL* reading is as follows: ISTRUMENTA SERVI TUI NARITANUS| ISTRUMENTA SERVI TUI NARONI.[98] This inscription appears to label objects or implements (*I[n]strumenta*) within the synagogue. Irregular spellings and case endings impede the text's precise interpretation, but it appears to doubly label "the instruments of your servant, the Narotanian; the instruments of your servant, the one of Naro." The repetition of the label of "Naro" is emphatic and each half of the inscription appears to mostly mirror the other. There is no mention in this text of who might have commissioned this mosaic or the nature of the *instrumenta* that it labels. What appears to be most important is that this text labels implements that are critical to the synagogue's functionality.

Though the transcription of this text is relatively uncontroversial, its interpretation has been more varied. Most scholars assume that these "instruments" describe Torah texts. Darmon suggests that these mosaics either label a type of "Geniza" room, in which old Torah scrolls were buried (Darmon 1994, 23), or might signify a *heikhal*, a storage niche for the Torah, which is a common feature of modern Sephardic Jewish synagogues.[99] Goodenough, too, asserts that this mosaic inscription must have adorned the room that included the portable device that carried the Torah scrolls (Goodenough 1953, 2.91), though Hachlili

[98] Le Bohec's reading differs slightly: *Instrumenta |servi|tui Na|ronitanus* (right) *Instrumenta [se]r[vi] Amaron*i (Le Bohec no. 15). My reading follows that of *CIL* and Darmon, because the "NA" of the last word is merged in the same way as the "MA" of "Margarita" in the first inscription.

[99] Darmon suggests, "Je propose de comprendre ce pavement comme une petite mosaïque funéraire marquant le lieu d'ensevelissement de rouleaux bibliques ayant appartenu à ce personage: on aurait donc à faire ici à une petite *geniza*, lieu d'ensevelissement des rouleux de Torah et autres documents vénérables devenus hors d'usage" (1994, 23).

denies that such portable arks were used in antiquity (Hachlili 1988, 166, 187). Other interpretations also suggest that this mosaic designated the room in which the Torah scrolls were stored (*MHT* I 153; Hirschberg 1974, 51).

Whether the texts mark a Genizah-like room or a burial area for old Torah scrolls is entirely unclear. Lack of supplementary artifacts inhibits a fuller understanding of the use of the room, the inscribed mosaic, and the room's contents; the room could have contained another genre of instruments entirely, such as lamps, or even musical instruments. Prejudices about Jewish continuity in North Africa, however, ought not to ground confident assumptions about the room's uses or the appurtenances it contained.[100] The texts certainly label instruments that were so critical to the synagogue's functioning that they merited permanent and reverent commemoration in this mosaic. Such types of mosaics are unattested in other North African devotional buildings, but their lack of regional or pan-Mediterranean precedent impedes their interpretation here.[101]

The inscribed mosaics at Hammam Lif offer complex, and occasionally obscure, suggestions about certain aspects of devotional practices in North Africa in the sixth century. While there remain several regionally unconventional features in the texts' terminology and symbology, the broader features of the inscriptions appear to align with practices common in contemporary devotional spaces in North Africa.

Traditionally, scholars have emphasized the strictly eastern, and thereby pan-Mediterranean Jewish, features of the synagogue's inscriptions. Darmon connects the inscriptions at Hammam Lif with practices of euergetism that had been imported from the Byzantine east. His interpretation of Naro's inscriptions rests upon a conviction that western-dwelling African Jews were hearkening to their "eastern" Jewish cultural origins. This interpretation, however, does not account for two conventional features of donative practices in North Africa. First, as previously reviewed, generations of dedicants had publicly commemorated their gifts to municipal and devotional buildings in North Africa. Second, by the sixth century, features of the Greek east were more

[100] *Instrumenta* occurs in the Vulgate: "haec sunt instrumenta tabernaculo testimonii quae numerata sunt iuxta praeceptum Mosi in caerimonias Levitarum per manum Ithamar filii Aaron sacerdoti" (*Vulg. Ex*. 33.21).

[101] This is not to say that other inscriptions did not mark objects specifically dedicated for votive purposes. In Africa during Roman republican rule, inscribed "instrumenta" were frequently dedicated to pagan temples and labeled accordingly.

common in North Africa generally—the entry of Byzantine troops into Africa ushered various practices, including those of eastern expressions euergetism, into the African west (Duval 1994, 157–9; Ghalia 2002, 217). In certain ways, therefore, features of Greek eastern devotional practices may be exemplified in Hammam Lif's mosaics. But while Darmon connects the mosaics' exhibition of euergetism with donors' particular desires to hearken to Jewish practices as eastern traits, features of these inscriptions are well situated among conventional devotional practices of the Byzantine North African world.

V. Objects of Devotion

The artifacts discovered at Hammam Lif have suffered the greatest neglect of all the synagogue's related finds. No proper site report was ever fully published and, as a result, no official account of its small finds has been produced. By 1886, Reinach noted within *Revue des Études Juives* a critique of the treatment of small finds from Hammam Lif:

> M. de Prudhomme avait annoncé sommairement la découverte de fragments de marbre et de debris d'un chandelier à sept branches (*Revue archéologique*, 1883, I, p. 161). Il adressa à l'Academie, en même temps qu'une aquarelle de la mosaïque, le dessin de quatre objets trouvés au lieu des fouilles, deux lampes en terre cuite, un chapiteau et un «fragment du chandelier à sept branches». Ces dessins, remis à M. Renan, puis à M.A. Bertrand, furent jugés trop mauvais pour être publiés dans la *Revue archéologique*; ils restèrent dans les tiroirs de M. Bertrand, qui eut l'obligeance de nous les communiquer tout récemment. Ce sont les dessins *á l'effet* peu exacts et qui ne prennent d'intérèt que par suite de la disparition des originaux (1886, 217–218).

Most of the artifacts from Hammam Lif and their original drawings were lost by the time of Reinach's note (1886, 217–218). The erratic distribution of some of the synagogue's artifacts in Tunisian, Algerian and French museums, combined with their untraceable sale on the art market contributed to the destruction of any stable record for the site.

A basic account of the artifacts attested in the informal reports on the synagogue's excavation raises some possibilities about the more ephemeral aspects of the devotional activities that occurred inside. As Reinach detailed (1886, 220–221), some finds were noted in the building's excavation; these included part of a "menorah" and a section of a column. Reinach's drawing of the "menorah" piece indicates why this designation is questionable, as it is an abstracted stone fragment of dubious context (Figure 15b).

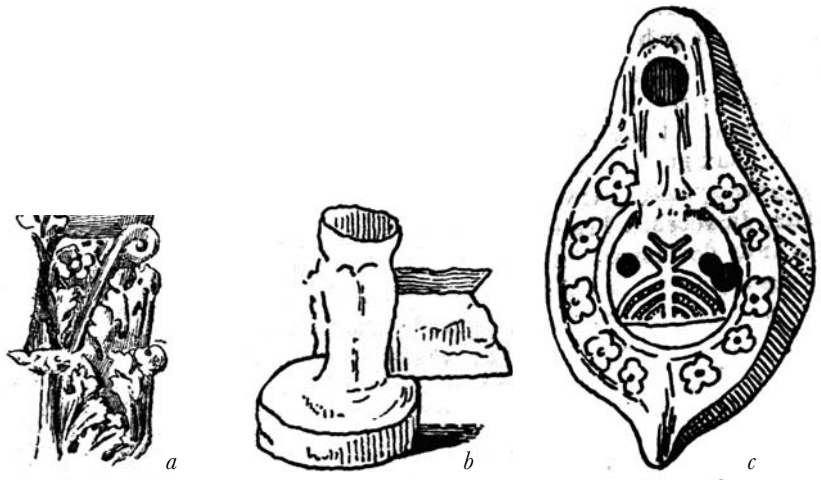

Figure 15. Portion of column capital (a), indeterminate find (b), and menorah lamp (c), discovered in excavations of Naro synagogue. Sketches: Reinach 1886, 221, figs. 1, 3, 4

The column capital of a Byzantine Corinthian order (15a) is less ambiguous: it appears conventional for devotional building decoration in the late sixth century. The ambiguity of the capital's find context, however, prevents fuller knowledge of its original location and use.

More reliable for the investigation of the structure's related appurtenances was the discovery of lamps and their fragments within the structure (Reinach 1886, 217; Figure 15c). Icard detailed his discovery of a number of lamps in his excavations that followed Prudhomme's (1910). Icard reports his discovery of the following objects and a brief description of their decoration in this exact manner:

a. Jewish lamps
- •6 Jewish lamps, of very fine white fine clay. Menorah with 7 branches in relief
- •1 Jewish lamp of yellow clay. Menorah with 7 branches in relief
- •2 Jewish lamps in red clay. Menorah with "only" 5 branches.
- •2 Jewish lamps of grey clay. Menorah with 5 branches
- •4 Jewish lamps without subject. White fine clay. Absolutely similar to those decorated with a subject.[102]
- •2 Jewish lamps of white clay. Triangle in relief mounted on "une sorte de croissant renversé. L'intérieur du triangle est orné des petits points en relief."

[102] Icard noted that the other types of lamps have double aeration holes, while this category of lamp only possesses one (1910, clxxiii).

- "The workers broke a dozen Jewish lamps bearing relief decoration, both with 7 and 5 branched menorot"

b. Christian lamps
- 10 Christian lamps, big and little

c. Two Christian marks on vase fragments

d. Two "clés," a cement pilon, and thirteen coins of the high Empire

Icard also notes the presence of one Christian inscription, discovered among column bases (1910, clxxii–clxxiii).[103] The stratigraphy, content and fate of the inscription are unknown. None of these finds have been attested in any other publications and the majority of the listed artifacts are probably lost.

Icard's list creates an abstract archaeological record for Hammam Lif. No documentation survives for the listed objects' stratigraphy, find contexts, or images.[104] Only one sketch of one lamp with a menorah and of a single column capitol remain: these are reproduced here (Figure 15). It is unclear, too, why Icard classified certain lamps as "Jewish" if they have no subject, or why he considered certain vase fragments to be specifically Christian. Distributions of finds are ignored and deposit patterns of Jewish versus Christian lamps are unknown. These oversights and ambiguities render impossible a definitive attempt to posit chronologies of the building's use, the populations that attended the building, and the possible relationships between the typologies of these objects with those discovered in other devotional structures. Must such finds remain entirely superfluous for the examination of the synagogue's devotional practices?

Many of the objects listed as discovered at Hammam Lif appear comparable to those found within other devotional structures in North Africa (*e.g.*, Church at Bir el-Knissa, Rossiter 1993; Ferchiou 1993). Walls of local churches were decorated with similar construction materials

[103] In addition to this list reported by Icard, one molded clay compartmentalized box is associated with the artifacts from the Hammam Lif. In 2003, it rest within the "Christian Period" display at the Carthage Museum and is labelled as a "writing kit" from Hammam Lif. Yet its precise use remains unclear, as does its provenance. In his article, Pinard states that this clay molded box "est conservée dans les reserves du Musée Lavigerie. Nous ne connaissons pas le récit de sa découverte. Cet objet *peut-être* de l'antique synagogue de Hammam Lif" (1956, 82; my emphasis). Pinard notes that neither Delattre, nor his contemporaries made note of this artifact. Though it is tempting to review it in this context, its provenance is too unsure.

[104] This problem, unfortunately, is endemic to the study of votive objects throughout the Mediterranean (Van Straten 1992, 254, n. 22). Jewish lamps of comparable provenance may be included in museum collections in North Africa. For examples, see Deneauve (1969, no. 997, 1105, 1113–1118).

and adorned with column capitals of comparable design in the fifth and sixth centuries, *e.g.*, Taksebt 1.b (*BCAN* I, 2.16.2), and Timgad 3.5 (*BCAN* I, 2.98.5). Lamps with images similar to Icard's basic descriptions have also been discovered in pagan, Christian, and Jewish devotional and funerary contexts throughout North Africa in the third to sixth centuries, though the lack of documentation of their find contexts at Hammam Lif impedes the possibility of interpreting artifacts' relationships to each other and to the surrounding building.[105]

Hammam Lif's objects, then, remain suggestive of certain limited possibilities of local devotional practice. Like churches of the period, the synagogue appears to have been appropriately decorated with columns with elaborate capitals. Like earlier temples and contemporaneous churches it appears to have contained donated fine-wares, such as elaborately decorated lamps.[106] The existence of "Christian" lamps and inscriptions might provisionally indicate that some Christians might have posited votive lamps in the building at some point (Icard 1910). Lack of adequate documentation, however, makes it difficult to know whether these artifacts are contemporaneous to the use of the structure or reflect subsequent processes of "Christianization" of the site (*Cod. theod.* 16.14.32).

VI. Mediterranean Context of the Devotional System at Hammam Lif

Thus far, the review of the synagogue has emphasized the contextual examination of its individual aspects; many of the synagogue's components accord with those of contemporaneous North African devotional buildings. Much of the architectural, artistic, and epigraphic vocabularies of the structure index features conventional for North African devotional contexts, while others remain more ambiguous or index alterity to conventional North African devotional practice. What is the most productive way to evaluate the cultural identities of those who shaped the devotional system at Hammam Lif?

[105] These lamps are catalogued in museum and private catalogues throughout Africa and Europe. For examples of similar lamps within private collections, see Adler (2004).

[106] The actual use of these is unclear. Whether they were objects donated to the synagogue, or whether they were used for practical purposes—to shed light—cannot be discerned from the descriptions at hand (Icard 1910).

A. *Similarities to Regional Devotional Practices*

This study is not the first to note the multiple similarities between the Hammam Lif synagogue and other contemporaneous North African devotional structures. In one of the earliest reviews of Hammam Lif's architecture, Renan compared the synagogue's structure to that of a small church. He asserts that, "C'est la vue de ce plan qui écarte décidement l'idée d'une petite église, les églises chrétiennes n'ayant jamais présenté la disposition de notre edifice. Le *presbyterium* et le *ciborium* sont toujours au fond, dans l'axe de la salle" (Renan 1884, 275). Different phases of the synagogue's construction correspond with contemporaneous manifestations of devotional architecture, parallel to the "Aulus Ecclesia" style in the third and fourth centuries, and to Christian basilical styles in the centuries following. The last phase of the building, as Renan observes, does resemble a small church. The plan and the orientation of this ultimate phase of the building reflect plans and orientations of other devotional structures in the same region.

The decoration of the synagogue's structure, its inclusion of mosaic carpets with ornamental geometric motifs, figurative representations of palms, peacocks, a fountain, and birds, joined with combined nautical and land motifs, largely demonstrate conventions of North African devotional decoration. The inscriptions within the mosaic broadly index conventions of contemporaneous North African donative practice—in this "sacred" place donors publicly flaunted their private gifts to fund the adornment of the synagogue's floor and architectural members. Such acts were intended to merit their salvation and illustrate common practices of euergetism that had grown increasingly popular in devotional spaces by the Byzantine period in North Africa. To the degree that they are recorded, too, the genres of small finds discovered within the structure appear to be typical of local devotional buildings. Architectural, epigraphic, and artistic aspects of Hammam Lif index conventional devotional practices in "sacred" spaces in late Roman North Africa.

B. *Differences from Regional Devotional Practices*

Other features of Hammam Lif's devotional system clearly index difference from common local practice. These include the presence of obscure images in the mosaic, the decorative and epigraphic integration of the symbols of menorot, as well as the naming of the building as

a synagogue and the conferring of offices with titles that include the synagogue's name. The mosaic labeling of the building's *i[n]strumenta* is also regionally unprecedented.[107] If these aspects of devotional practice do not index *sameness* to North African practice, do they simultaneously and positively index *sameness* to other cultural contexts?

Two images that cannot be explained by direct affiliation to local African practices may be explained through comparisons with pan-Mediterranean Jewish ones. The first of these idiosyncratic images is that in the upper mosaic that depicts descending spikes; it is not only ambiguous, but regionally unprecedented. It neither resembles any representations of hands of god in Christian or Jewish "sacrifice of Isaac" scenes from North Africa, nor does it look like any other North African images that might appear in the same place within a stock motif. In all of the Mediterranean, only one particular representation of a descending spiked object may be comparable—that which depicts rays emanating from the descending hand of God within a "sacrifice of Isaac" scene in the Beth Alpha mosaic pavement from Roman Palestine (Hachlili 1998, 241; Darmon 1994, 24, fig. 19). Even if the periphery of the Beth Alpha image and the documented portion of the Hammam Lif mosaic are comparable, however, the context of their images are not. Would a hand of God, and accompanying rays, be inserted into this particular land/nautical mosaic motif at Hammam Lif in this particular fashion? The "sacrifice of Isaac" motif was popular among North African Christians, but no images of the scene similarly render the hand of God in mosaic. This image, then, appears to be locally and regionally inexplicable. Its idiosyncracy, however, cannot necessarily be explained through pan-Mediterranean Jewish comparison.

The decoration and labeling of the "instrumenta" room is also unconventional. In this case, mosaic inscriptions mark the location for storage or placement of instruments integral to the function of the synagogue. I have not found comparably labeled rooms in local basilicas and the instruments in question remain obscure.[108] Their designation

[107] I have only viewed one other mosaic inscription that labels an aspect of the room it adorns. This is a mosaic which reads "ad rosam" within a room also adorned with mosaic flowers in Sousse. A Tunisian colleague showed me this mosaic *in situ* in September 2003.

[108] Earlier pagan inscriptions, however, do label the objects that they had dedicated for use within temples.

in mosaic is locally unusual and equally inexplicable by appealing to pan-Mediterranean contexts.

On the other hand, an additional idiosyncratic image does appear to simultaneously index *difference* from North African convention and *sameness* to that within another cultural context. Such is the integration of the menorah symbol at Hammam Lif. In most instances in North Africa and elsewhere in the Mediterranean, the presence of a menorah is itself considered to be the marker of Jewishness *par excellence* (Hachlili 2001).[109] A thorough discussion of the menorah as a symbol and its decorative uses, therefore, need not be reviewed here. The image appears on all types of Jewish artifacts throughout the Mediterranean, such as gold glasses, lamps, donative inscriptions, and epitaphs (Hachlili 2001; Hachlili 1998, 311–348).

Two aspects of the menorah's presence at Hammam Lif, however, are worthy of note. First, the symbol of the menorah remains one of the most explicit and consistent markers of difference in the entire building complex. Three images of it adorn Room 5 alone. This use of the symbol might appear conventional in the context of a *sinagoga*, but for the precise medium of its presentation: across the Mediterranean menorot appear frequently on many types of Jewish artifacts, but only rarely appear in the medium of mosaic. Aside from its presence in the pavement at Hammam Lif, symbols of menorot are only depicted in three mosaic floors of the ancient synagogues at Apamea, Bova Marina, and Philippopolis (Hachlili 1998, 317–318). The symbol's depiction in mosaic at Hammam Lif remains unusual both within North African and pan-Mediterranean Jewish devotional contexts.[110]

Certain aspects of the synagogue's terminology and hierarchy also appear to primarily index broader pan-Mediterranean Jewish contexts. The terminology of the synagogue and its organization are only attested in these mosaics and within select epitaphs from North

[109] Frequently the use of the menorah to identify items as Jewish yields a circular approach to related evidence (something is Jewish because it is marked by a menorah and it is a menorah because the thing is of Jewish context), but this is not *entirely* the case here—as the symbols, in conjunction with the explicit announcement of the building's identity as a synagogue appear to index "Jewishness." Whether it is exclusively a sign of Jewishness—and, moreover, what exact manifestation of Jewishness—is another question entirely.

[110] In the case of Hammam Lif, furthermore, the exact depiction of the menorot might relate to the conditions of the mosaics' donation—particular renderings of these menorot could possibly symbolize a particular donor.

Africa (Le Bohec 65, 74, 79). One epitaph from Volubilis explicitly connects a synagogue office to the synagogue's designation as a place that specifically belonged to Jews ("Here lies Kaikilianos, *Protopolites*, Father of the synagogue of the Jews. . . . (ὁ προτοπόλιτες πατὴρ τῆς συνγωγῆς τῶν Ἰουδέων," Le Bohec no. 79). Not only is Kaikilianos' office described as relating to the "sinagoga," but the sinagoga, in turn, is clearly labeled "of the Jews" (τῶν Ἰουδέων). Offices related to the synagogue hierarchy, such as "father" and "leader" of the synagogue (Le Bohec no. 65, 74) distinctively resemble devotional hierarchies in pan-Mediterranean Jewish contexts.[111]

The additional title of "ancilla" at Hammam Lif, however, does not appear to be conventional within the context of synagogues throughout the Mediterranean. In this case, perhaps, the hierarchy within the Hammam Lif synagogue is informed strictly by local North African, rather than pan-Mediterranean Jewish, devotional practices and precedents. The title of "ancilla," perhaps, may have been used singularly within the devotional milieus of Jewish populations in North Africa.

VI. Conclusion

Resemblances between Hammam Lif and contemporaneous North African structures are traditionally considered to have resulted from a surprising type of cultural corruption. In his mention of the small finds at Hammam Lif, Icard follows Renan (1884, 273) to note that the "curious mélange" of Christian and Jewish symbols in the synagogue's mosaics is echoed in the "curious mélange" of lamps and objects from the two "cultes" (Icard 1910, clxxiii). Renan describes the similarities between this Hammam Lif structure and local churches as the product of an inappropriate intermingling ("la promiscuité") among Jewish and Christian populations that used the synagogue.[112] Lee Levine, too, in

[111] The near complete absence of women officeholders in Christian basilicas and churches, as opposed to their significance within Jewish hierarchies in North Africa (*cf.* Le Bohec no. 4), also may be of import.

[112] Renan continues: "Aux texts que je citai, dans le discussion à l'Académie, pour établir la promiscuité de culte qui exista longtemps entre les juifs et les chrétiens, et en particulier aux texts de saint Jean Chrysostome, on peut ajouter le curieux texte que voici: il est d'Agobard, dans sa letter à Nebridius, évêque de Narbonne, *De cavendo convictu et societate judaeorum,* écrite vers 825: 'Unde et in tantum erroris pelagus nonulli ex vulgaribus ac rusticis abducuntur, ut hunc solum Dei populum, apud hos piae religionis observantiam, ac multo certiorem quam nostra sit fidem, et seducto suspiciant animo, et ore impio inter pares et consimiles fateantur'" (1884, 275). Renan's terminology

his work on the ancient synagogue, expresses surprise that the mosaic panels from the synagogue "display some remarkable parallels with mosaics from Christian churches in North Africa" (Levine 2000, 260). These characterizations derive from assumptions about necessary and appropriate cultural divisions between Jews and their neighbors.

Assumptions about Jews' separateness and their primary identification with the culture of Jews elsewhere in the Mediterranean, rather than their immediate neighbors, have encouraged previous authors to emphasize only "corrupted," or "Jewish" aspects of North African devotional expression. What these studies have missed, however, is what is particularly complex and North African about the North African Jewish devotional system at Hamman Lif. North African Jews used their regional cultural vocabularies to construct sacred space dedicated to deity and to publicly record their generosity. The synagogue's structure, its decoration, its related donative practices, and its contents, best exemplify material devotion to deity in North Africa. The Jewish populations of Naro drew from North African devotional practices to define the space of the synagogue, its related organizational hierarchies and the activities that occured within it.

In such ways, the devotees at Hammam Lif selectively used devotional practices of their cultural environment to signify similarity to a notion of Jewish culture. Signs of cultural difference occasionally mark the otherwise locally conventional architecture and decoration. These symbols and signs are distinctive. Yet, throughout, it is the North African medium of devotional expression that facilitates Jews' abilities to index their cultural identities in these particular ways.

What is most significant about such practices is not whether North Africans Jews' methods of marking difference actually accorded with those attested in Jewish devotional practice elsewhere. Instead, what is most imporant is their attempt to differentiate themselves, to some degree, from local practice in a way that intends to positively describe sameness to their *perception* of what "Jewishness" should look like. Whether the images, symbols, names of offices, and the synagogue structure *actually* resemble those of Jews in other places is secondary within this cultural approach.[113]

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to describe this process, is that of inappropriate sexual intermingling and resembles that which church fathers use to describe identical cultural dynamics.

[113] If this project were more of a social historical one, such information might be germane; if one is attempting to posit a community's Mediterranean origins, *actual*

The remains of the synagogue at Hammam Lif exemplify only one manifestation of Jewish North African devotional expression at one place and time. It is impossible to determine how other synagogues in North Africa might have compared to this one, or whether those who participated in the practices of other synagogues possessed commensurate self-understandings. The case study of Hammam Lif, however, demonstrates the possibility that Jews, just as pagans and Christians, used the devotional vocabularies of their immediate environment to index their similarity to, and particular differences from, their surrounding cultures. Diverse genres of devotional practice facilitated the expression of complex and varied cultural identities.

similarities and connections between Jewish practices at Hammam Lif and elsewhere might support hypotheses about connections between African and non-African Jewish populations.

CHAPTER SIX

NORTH AFRICAN RESPONSES TO DEATH: CHOOSING APPROPRIATE GODS, NEIGHBORS, AND HOUSES IN THE AFTERLIFE

Burial epigraphy and archaeology have played particularly important roles in the analysis of Jewish culture of Roman North Africa because most extant Jewish materials in the region relate to burial and to the marking of the tombs for the deceased. Taking advantage of the fecundity of sources, scholars have relied on their interpretations of commemorative aspects of epitaphs and funeral archeology to derive broader—and, at times, competing—claims about the parameters of North African Jewish beliefs, practices, and communities in the Roman period.

Interpretations of the catacombs at Gammarth in Tunisia have been disproportionately influential in the development of this literature and have spawned many of these competing analyses. To some ninteenth-century French missionaries, correspondence between the burial architecture of the Gammarth catacombs and Palestinian burial spaces substantiated their claims that North African Jews had traveled directly from the Holy Land and had brought associated theologies and customs with them (Delattre 1895, 49).[1] Subsequent archaeologists

[1] "Après voir rappelé que ce mode de sépulture était celui des Juifs, d'après ce qui est dit, dans l'Ancient Testament, des tombeux d'Abraham, d'Isaac, d'Ismaël, de Jacob, et dans l'Évangile, du tombeau de Notre Seigneur. Beulé conclut que l'usage des Sémites de la Palestine était une loi absolue chez les Semites de Carthage" (Delattre 1895, 17). Delattre also likened the loculi of the Gammarth catacombs to the constructions of the tombs of Lazarus and of Christ himself. The analogies maintained for the interpretation of the necropolis focused on the connections with Palestine and the texts of the Hebrew Bible (1895, 18). He concluded, accordingly, that the Gammarth necropolis was not only Jewish, but also specifically related to the Palestinian origins of the earliest Christianity in North Africa ("Il y a tout lieu de croire que les premières conversions à Carthage comme à Jerusalem, eurent lieu parmi les Juifs. La nécropole de Gamart a peut-être servi à la sepulture des premiers fidèles Carthaginois"). Delattre describes how: "Il y avait assurément des Juifs à Carthage lorsque les envoyés de la Bonne-Nouvelle y firent leur apparition… Enfin Nicéphore Callixte dit expressément que l'apôtre Simon aurait visité toute la Libye en préchant l'Évangile" (1895, 49). He concludes,

similarly explained the apparently "idiosyncratic" architecture of the Jewish African catacombs as resulting from the Palestinian Jews' transposition to the west of the burial habits exemplified in Jericho and Beth She'arim in the east (Goodenough 1953, 2.65; Hachlili 1998, 208). Still others pointed to the alignment of the construction of North African tombs with the prescriptions for burial architecture set forth in Babylonian Talmudic texts. These scholars have evaluated the African "manifestations" of Talmudic prescriptions accordingly (*b. Baba Batra* 100b–102b; Le Bohec 1981a, 168).[2] Assertions within Christian literary texts, too, have fortified scholars' conclusions that only select and Jewish individuals were permitted to be included in the "Jewish" burial complex (Le Bohec 1981a, 168–169).[3] The resulting interpretation of the catacombs—that they represent the burials of those who possessed Palestinian origin, uniform beliefs, and antagonism toward Christian neighbors—has been applied to Jewish culture of Roman North Africa generally (Le Bohec 1981a, 168).[4]

The prevailing interpretation has been reified through over a century of often uncritical repetition. Yet upon closer inspection, this perspective and its broader social-historical corollaries unravel. After all, were North African Jewish burial practices actually so different from those of their African neighbors? Did North African Jews only bury with one another? Are foreign comparanda and, moreover, local polemics the most appropriate media for interpreting North African Jewish burial

"Les hypogées de Gamart appartiennent donc indubitablement à une nécropole juive" (1895, 51).

[2] See Avigad (1976) and. Zanger (1994) for maps of catacombs in Beth She'arim and Jericho; *cf. b. Baba Batra* 101a–b. Of course, the presumed connection between Iron Age II burials in Jericho and third- through fifth-century burials in Africa derives from assumptions, which still prevail in many circles, about continuities between ancient Israelite practices and those of only Judaism.

[3] The animosity Tertullian describes in his interpretation of Christian scripture between Jews and christians (*e.g., Scorp*. X and *adv. Iud*. I) inspires Le Bohec to suggest that Jews and Christians at Gammarth and elsewhere would have refused to bury their dead together. Le Bohec states, "De plus, la haine entre Juifs et Chrétiens était très vive, attesté au plus tard dès Tertullien, alors que cette nécropole est d'époque relativement basse" (Le Bohec 1981a, 168).

[4] It is unclear whether this characterization implies that the North African Jews were aware of similar practices, which also informed the formation of the Talmudic text in Babylonia, or whether they possessed "copies" of the texts themselves. Either way, such an assertion has little substantiation within this context.

archaeology and culture? Although the methods that have produced this school of interpretation have served well those perspectives that are rooted in Jewish and Christian theology (Beulé 1889; Delattre 1895), they are inadequate in explaining the evidence presented by a broader investigation of North African Jewish culture. In fact, a reluctance to review permutations of Jewish North African burial practices within their local contexts not only leaves the archaeological evidence in relative obscurity, but also hinders the development of more fertile lines of inquiry.

In this chapter, I apply a different approach to the evidence for burial practices at Gammarth and elsewhere in North Africa. I argue that previous assertions about the Palestinian origins and Talmudic nature of the North African Jewish community, formed on the basis of foreign comparisons for the burial materials, are both misleading and false. Certainly, in some ways North African Jewish funerary and burial practices resemble those of Jews and non-Jews from elsewhere in the Mediterranean. Such is the nature of ancient Mediterranean cultural processes. Yet these Jewish burial practices appear equally, if not more, similar to the burial practices of North African neighbors than they do to non-African Jewish practices. They should be analyzed accordingly.

I argue that while some Jewish commemorative and burial practices are idiosyncratic within their local North Africa contexts, they generally index a cultural "sameness" with their neighbors, rather than the cultural difference scholars have presumed. Different points of comparison, in turn, yield different interpretations of the Jewish archaeological materials. Those North African artifacts traditionally labeled as "marginal" according to understandings of pan-Mediterranean Jewish uniformity appear to be more conventional within Jewish and non-Jewish burial contexts in North Africa. Changing this perspective on the evidence alters the picture of local Jewish populations' practices for death, burial, and life.

In theory, studies of Roman African commemorative practices and archaeology ought to help contextualize the interpretation of the Jewish materials. The lack of recent studies that address funerary and burial practices in North Africa, unfortunately, hinders the ready establishment of this baseline local context.[5] Studies of North African burial practices

[5] Resulting analyses of Ian Morris (1992), as well as those produced in the edited volume of Pearce, Millet, and Strück (1993), have developed more sophisticated

are rare, disparate, and divided sharply between those based on archaeological evidence and others based on literary evidence (Burns 1997, 1–2).[6] Moreover, studies of Rome and Roman burial cannot simply replace those that might address burial practices in the southern Mediterranean.[7] As R. Jones emphasizes, the well-researched funeral ceremonies and burial customs of republican Rome cannot represent practices and understandings employed elsewhere in the provinces during other times (1993, 249).[8] The distinctiveness of African burial practices justifies Jones's concern: African pagan and Christian attitudes and practices concerning death appear to have coalesced in late ancient Africa in regionally varied and complex ways. The appropriate contextualization of Jewish archaeological materials is dependent on taking close notice of these regionally synthetic traits. In this chapter, therefore,

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approaches to the use of burial archaeology to explore social status, ethnicity, and gender for which works of Cannon (1989, 437–458) and Foster (1993, 207–212) are also helpful. Other approaches to Roman period burial and funerary customs establish different models for interpreting archeological evidence for Jewish burial in its North African context. Peter Ucko's critique of the assumptions implicit in analyses of ancient burial has encouraged classical scholars to apply more careful theoretical approaches to the exploration of the local and social dimension of ancient burial in the Mediterranean (1969).

[6] Most African burial materials are described in disparate site reports, with poor records and syntheses of data. More general analyses of burial practices are old and antiquated. Though thorough, these depend on perspectives more appropriate to their respective periods of scholarly discourse (*e.g.*, Delattre 1885; 1907; Monceaux 1902; 1904). Only recently has one edited work provided a more synthetic analysis of death and burial in Roman North Africa (Trousset 1995).

[7] Models exist for applying new methods of archaeology to groups in Roman North Africa (e.g., Pearce 1993, 247). Studies that compare burial within Roman Provinces to those within Rome itself emphasize local diversity of practice. Such approaches have been used to investigate burials within Gaul, Britain, and Germany (Murail and Girard 1993; Cleary 1993; Abegg-Wigg 1993). Similar analyses of burial in North Africa have been noticeably lacking, with one recent exception (Trousset 1995). Important studies of African Christian martyr tombs have more carefully examined the rituals, practices and understandings relating to death and exemplary burial in North Africa (Brown 1981; Duval 1982), but far fewer general studies exist to address quotidian Christian burial, funerary belief, and vernacular undertandings of afterlife.

[8] More general analyses of burial practices and materials are hamstrung by their antiquated methodology. For example, Jones critiques the wholesale (and common) application of Toynbee's seminal work on Roman burial to practices elsewhere in the provinces: "They tell us of the Classical Roman/Italian model of ceremony in the late first century B.C. and first century A.D. I found them of little use in trying to interpret the cemetery of a group of Romano-British peasants of the fourth century" (Jones 1993, 249).

it is necessary for me to partially reevaluate the African evidence as a precondition to my reevaluation of the Jewish materials.[9]

I. Methodology

An insistence on identifying criteria for a specifically "Jewish" burial hinders the development of an appropriate methodology that considers the complex interplay of Jewish burials in their North African cultural context. Epitaphs' find contexts, in addition to the use of locally unusual symbols, names, and language, may signify a burial's "Jewishness." Neither a list of these criteria, nor a repetition of the problems endemic to their use, need be repeated here. What does require additional attention, however, is the degree to which certain assumptions about these criteria have limited scholars' determinations of ranges of acceptably Jewish behaviors for commemorating the deceased.

In the past, prejudices about what a North African burial *should* look like, rather than what it *could* look like in North African contexts, have assured the lack of progress in conversations about Jewish African burial.[10] I am open to the possibility of different types of Jewish funerary signification and burial practices and thus must reject these presumptions about Jewish mortuary, funerary, and burial practice (*cf.* Davies 1999, 99–110). Like others, I believe that the presence of specifically Jewish markers, such as menorot, Jewish names, and Hebrew, probably signifies a Jewish burial and suggests that the other tombs in the same context might also be Jewish (Hachlili 2005). Here, however, I indicate the possibility of additional acceptable and complex Jewish symbols that signify ranges of burial theologies and mortuary practices.[11]

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[9] As Bruce Hitchner describes for the first centuries C.E. in Africa, "the provinces of the Roman Empire in the first two centuries after Christ were cultural hothouses [in] which rituals . . . . were acted out repeatedly and often unconsciously for the purpose in inventing a cultural middle ground between *Romanitas* and local customs and beliefs" (1995, 493).

[10] A menorah has also been considered a marker that would be used only by those intolerant of other types of symbols and the alternate deities they might connote; scholars' frequent conclusions that all burials that accompany those that bear the menorah insignia are "Jewish" are related to modern scholars' similar assumptions about the traditional theological and communal exclusivities of Jewish burial (*cf. b. Baba Batra* 101a; Hachlili 2005).

[11] I also challenge notions of the physical exclusivity of Jewish burial. While I consider the possibility that a grave that abuts a more strikingly "Jewish" one *might* mark

Furthermore, the presence of a menorah and comparable symbols in burial contexts, such as an etrog, lulav, or Hebrew script, do not necessarily indicate disbelief in contemporaneous regional understandings about an afterlife, total exclusiveness of funerary or burial practice, or the impossibility of placing a Jewish grave beside those that bear a distinct set of divine symbols.

My approach focuses on the cultural complexity of Jewish mortuary understandings, practices, and their temporal and local variations within North Africa.[12] An idiosyncratic Jewish sign on a burial marker, individual grave, or within a burial complex demonstrates the specific desire of the commemorator to mark the grave of the deceased as somehow different. Even in such cases, this desire to index difference through unconventional North African funerary iconography does not automatically indicate that the series of funerary and commemorative practices enacted for the same deceased were commensurately unconventional. Though the stele of the deceased might be marked with an unusual symbol, the treatment of the same corpse and the practices of his burial and interment may have been otherwise regionally typical. This appears to be the tendency even among those who marked their deceased *differently*: regardless of whether an epitaph was adorned with an unusual Jewish symbol, most Jews appear to have employed conventional North African means to bury and commemorate their deceased.[13]

Commemorative objects, inscriptions, and tombs are the most common forms of evidence of an ancient North African Jewish presence. Though these genres dominate the corpus of extant Jewish evidence, they remain intrinsically exceptional. Death created a simultaneously

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Jewish deceased, this neighbor *might not* have identified himself with the practices and beliefs of his "Jewish" neighbor in life.

[12] As previously discussed, the inverse of this principle limits our study—if a tomb has a non-idiosyncratic name and no Jewish symbol, it cannot be considered Jewish, even if the deceased might have considered himself or herself as such. This oversight necessarily limits this analysis.

[13] Of course, as I have repeatedly noted, I am not implying that individuals were capable of making entirely "free" choices about how to treat, label, and house their deceased. The culture in which they lived provided them with a tangible range of practices to consult. Some may have been of lower status and were lucky to be accorded a burial marker alone. Some Jews were creative in their renderings of burial symbols, which indexed a multiple of cultural components concurrently. Others only employed conventional means of symbolization for their dead. In all cases, the choices enacted for the renderings of names, language, and symbols on epitaphs merge, in these contexts, with conventional expectations for the situation of the deceased.

rare (once in a person's lifetime) and conventional (everyone dies) occasion to use non-ephemeral materials to demarcate the lives of the deceased and the concerns of the living. The investigation of ancient Jewish mortuary, funerary, and burial practices invites a range of methodological complications that relate to these conflicting motivations.

Scholars study the archaeology of burial to postulate how individuals lived. After all, vestiges of funerary and burial practices can suggest spectra of identities and life practices. As Serge Lancel boldly asserts, "le monde des morts est à bien des égard l'envers—souterrain—du monde des vivants" (Lancel 1995, 9).[14] The predominance of commemorative evidence over all other genres makes it even more accessible and enticing for scholars seeking to explore the evidence's broader cultural implications. But the exceptional nature of the materials cautions against facile connections between practices in life and commemorative and burial practices for death. Despite the assertions of Lancel, it remains important to note that distinctions exist between the commemoration and identities of the dead and the activities and identities of the living. A one-to-one relationship cannot be presumed between communities' methods of organizing and demarcating their dead and their organization and self-understandings in life (Ucko 1969). Though an examination of burial cannot immediately yield inverse truths about the world of the living, it can produce more proximate assessments of the identities and practices sustained by the living.

By extension, rules that govern how and with whom groups bury may or may not replicate exact relationships and communities in life. The question is more appropriately formulated by Jones, who asks "How can we assess the process of transformation from the community of the living to that of the dead?" (Jones 1993, 248). Such questions address the internal dynamics within communities while they also call into question the relationships between proximate individuals and populations that may have perceived themselves as distinct. Nonetheless, a review of permissible burial neighbors can help discern minimal acceptability: presumably, people would not bury their loved ones with those with whom they had divisive or antagonistic relationships in life. Put more positively, people do not bury their loved ones with their enemies.

In the absence of many African literary texts about burial, material evidence can serve as the only basis to signify the commemorators'

[14] See the introductory remarks of Lancel (1995, 9–16).

understandings about death, afterlife, and the efficacy of mortuary customs. An attempt to interpolate funerary epigraphy and burial archaeology, therefore, is both promising and dangerous. While the media appear to promise access to the "beliefs" and "intentions" of ancient actors, full access remains elusive. In the case of burial, I ultimately do suggest the plausibility of minimal interpretations of certain aspects of burial practice, such as the presence of grave goods within a Jewish burial. Such conclusions do not intend to explicate ancient "belief," but instead to describe ranges of possible Jewish understandings about death. If ancients dedicated the souls of the deceased to ancestral gods, placed food at their tombs, or engaged in decoration of burial spaces, one might consider the possibility that such practices are related to conceptions of an afterlife. Though some might argue that Jews may have enacted these practices simply *because it is what one does* when people die, such alternative explanations are also worth consideration.[15]

This chapter is organized around the range of symbolic and procedural aspects of Jewish burial. In the first portion of the chapter, I suggest that Jews marked their graves in a range of ways, and in some cases, in ways identical to those of their pagan and Christian neighbors. In earlier periods, this included dedicating the deceased to the divinized ancestors; in later periods, this may have included the integrating of common Christian, as well as Jewish, symbols. In the second portion of the chapter, I compare evidence for the series of funerary and commemorative practices enacted for the dead by Jews and those similarly enacted by their neighbors in North Africa. Finally, in so doing, I evaluate the corpse treatment, burial method, architecture, decoration, and ornamentation of Jewish burial spaces in their North African contexts.

This chapter employs terminology that reflects mortuary, burial, and funerary practices, as well as understandings of afterlife. Here, *mortuary* practices treat or refer to the dead body itself, *funerary* customs pertain to the primary treatment of the body immediately following death, and *burial* practices refer to the primary or secondary rites, states, and contexts in which the remains of a dead body are permanently situated. *Afterlife* serves to label any possible conception of the survival or

[15] Ian Morris (1992, 205–206) has critiqued traditional approaches to Greek, Roman, and Christian burial, which focus entirely on their use to determine "belief systems" and afterlife beliefs. Such issues are germane to the discussion here, but will not dominate my approach. For similar discussion see Pearce (1993, 1–3).

continuation of a life (body or soul) after a person's death.[16] Though the beliefs underlying these commemorative practices are intangible, the extant objects signifying funerary and burial practice are not—these are deliberately and physically represented.

II. God(s) and Death

African Jewish methods of marking the dead encompass a range of manifestations. On one end of the symbolic spectrum are those epitaphs that bear no explicit Jewish symbolization at all: inscriptions that may have been Jewish but are completely lacking discernable marks of cultural distinction. On the other end of the spectrum are those markers that appear to index only Jewish context. In this way, the presence of a menorah on a burial marker has been considered to serve as a marker of "Jewish" burial *par excellence* (Hachlili 2001). Epitaphs throughout North Africa from Oea (Le Bohec nos. 4, 5, 6), Thina (Le Bohec nos. 7, 8), Carthage (Le Bohec 20), Gammarth (Le Bohec nos. 23, 24), and Thagura (Le Bohec nos. 67, 68) contain images of such menorot which accord with those distinguished within Hachlili's typologies (2001). Many scholars traditionally presume that these images signify concordant beliefs, intentions, and theologies that require consistent, monolithic, and exclusive monotheistic religious understandings (Hachlili 2001; 2005). Were these two directions of symbolization (unmarked versus unconventionally marked) the only options for epitaph decoration of North African Jews? And can the choice of one or another of these paths actually describe the type of commemorative supplications offered by the people who selected them? Certain African Jewish epitaphs anticipate negative responses to such questions.

During the second through fourth centuries, most North African Latin epitaphs appeal to specific deities appropriate for the care of the deceased. The majority of these inscriptions request the *Di Manes*; often indicated by the letters *DMS*, to protect a person's soul in the afterlife. Although this ligature is considered to be distinctly

[16] Any more specific definition of *afterlife* here is not possible and there are no local Jewish texts that describe this concept. There are sporadic allusions to related concepts in North African Roman and Christian literary sources, but there is no way to know how these concepts were understood by broader North African, let alone by Jewish populations.

"pagan," and is attested in Roman Punico-African epitaphs, it continues to be employed in the epitaphs of the earliest Christians in North Africa (Sanders 1976, 289–290).[17] The use of the abbreviation only ends in the later fourth century when it is replaced by other dominant symbols, such as the chi rho symbol or a Latin cross. Scholars have considered these changes in commemorative practice to to reflect commensurately altered understandings of religion and afterlife in North Africa.

In contrast, Jewish funerary epigraphy is typically regarded as impervious to such broader trends in North African commemoration. Under this view, Jews would neither supplicate the *Di Manes* nor appeal to the types of Christian deity or deities a chi rho might signify (Rutgers 1995, 270–272). Rather, Jewish understandings of "one God," as distinct from that of Christian or pagan appeal, are generally presumed. The absence of Jewish artifacts that concurrently bore the *DMS* ligature or other Christian markers was adduced as proof of this thesis.[18] Some African Jewish epitaphs, in contrast, imply that this *argument ex silencio* cannot be fully sustained in all cases. Certain funerary stelai indicate that at the time of death some African Jews might have appealed to a range of deities, the identities of which shifted according to preference, regional tendency, or fashion.

A. *The Di Manes in the Late Republic/Early Principate*

While the exact meaning of *Dis Manibus Sacrum* remains stubbornly obscure, the phrase appears to represent a Roman conception of divinized ancestors, or divine shades. In North Africa, as throughout the Roman Empire, *DMS* epitaphs were extremely common; tens of thousands of inscriptions from Roman North Africa dedicate the deceased to the *Di Manes*. Scholars have variously translated the phrase "to the deified ancestors" (Beard, North and Price 2000, 31) or "to the gods of the underworld" (Rutgers 1995, 269).

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[17] Some scholars of early Christianity have remained uncomfortable with this notion and have posited that in Christian epitaphs, *DMS* represents an alternate phrase or perhaps phrases, such as *Deo Meo Sancto* (Janier 1956, 80).

[18] For discussion of proof of these coincidental Jewish and "pagan" symbols, see Rutgers (1995, 272).

Figure 1. Latin epitaphs from Carthage that include the dedication of the deceased to the *Di Manes*
Reprinted with permission of L'école française du Rome

By the second century B.C.E., *DMS* becomes a ubiquitous commemorative expression in most of North Africa.[19] Specifically within this region, the exact meaning of the reference to the *Di Manes* has remained particularly obscure. The North African inscriptions of *DMS* frequently appear identical to those found on Roman epitaphs, but it is impossible to determine how indigenous, Punic, or Libyan understandings of death had incorporated these Latin expressions and conceptions.[20]

[19] One exception appears to be certain regions of contemporary Morocco. It is possible that a correlation exists between the presence of Palmyrene troops in this region and their selective reluctance to adopt this expression. A count within *Les inscriptions latines du Maroc* indicates that in certain areas there were proportionally fewer representations of *DMS*. It is unclear whether this phrase disagreed with the ideologies or practices of Syrians stationed in this area, or of local groups.

[20] The *Di Manes* are also popularly invoked within North African tabellae defixiones and other "magical" texts. Unfortunately, the references to them remain equally obscure within this context. See discussion in Gager (1992, 12) and Audollent (1967, no. 222). J.-P. Burns assumes that these Roman festivals were celebrated in exactly the same manner in North Africa (1997, 2), but evidence for this is not apparent. African Punic and

In Republican Rome, certain days were designated specifically to celebrate and sacrifice to the ancestor gods (*manes*) throughout the holidays of the Parentalia (13 February), Feralia (21 February, end of Parentalia), and Lemuria (9, 11, 13 May).[21] Whether these practices may have similarly manifested themselves within North African territories, let alone whether they continued at all through the second through fourth centuries C.E., remains unclear.[22]

What is apparent is that the North African epigraphic corpus includes funerary inscriptions that contain "Jewish-like" names and also dedicate the souls of the deceased to the *DMS*. One such epitaph is incised in a limestone sarcophagus situated in the Tunisian coastal town of Bou Ficha (Figure 2).[23] The front side of the sarcophagus contains a conventional wave design and an inscription that reads: "DMS IUDASI COSMU" (Le Bohec no. 12). The reverse of the sarcophagus is decorated with florets, acanthus, and vases overflowing with fruit and vines (see Fournet-Pilipenko 1961–62, 78–107).[24] The format of the inscription is simple and conventional for epitaphs in North Africa—it dedicates the named deceased to the *Di Manes*. The decoration of the sarcophagus, too, is entirely typical of late third through fourth-century funerary art in the region. For these reasons, this sarcophagus initially

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Roman burials demonstrate particular devotional practices and relationships to ancestors—this is reflected in the libation tombs and architectures at Thina and elsewhere (Barrier and Benson 1908, figs. 1–10).

[21] Within Republican Rome, the Parentalia was celebrated by the sacrifice of a pig (North, Beard, and Price 2001, 137). It is unclear whether this specific animal was used during later periods or in Roman provinces.

[22] A more thorough discussion of the *Manes* in Rome specifically is to be found in Ducos (1995, 135–144).

[23] In the early 1900s, a group of French soldiers discovered one such *DMS* inscription during their military detail in central Tunisia. The text is incised into a limestone sarcophagus, which allegedly remains *in situ* near an abandoned highway route in the ghost-town of Bou Ficha, along the Tunisian coast. Despite several attempts, I was not able to find this sarcophagus myself. Though it appears on the map within *Atlas archéologique*, it may have been removed from the private property on which it was situated in Hr Harrarat (*Atl. Arch.* 1.3).

[24] Based on the extreme stylistic similarities between this sarcophagus and one discovered in Douar-Chott, between Carthage and La Goulette Tunisia, I would tentatively date this sarcophagus to the late third century. The comparable sarcophagus bears the dedication, *DMS/Mar. Gatosus/[vi]xit an(nos) XXXI/mensibus XI (in) pac(e)* within a tabula ansata (Fournet-Pilipenko (1961–1962, 118, no. 97). Fournet-Pilipenko dates the text to the third century and states that it is one of the earliest Christian monuments found around Carthage. These motifs are characteristic of "pagan" and Christian sarcophagi of the second and third centuries (1961–1962, 118). For North African treatments of *xenia* (still-life images) in sculpture and mosaic consult Parrish (1993, 446–448).

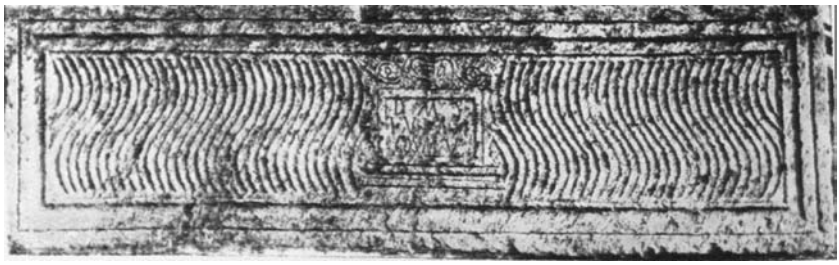

Figure 2. Limestone sarcophagus with dedication "DMS Iudasi Cosmu," Bou Ficha (Segermes), Tunisia. Fournet-Pilipenko 1961–1962, no. 149, pl. XIV. Photo reproduced with permission of Peeters Publishers.

appears to be unexceptional among the thousands of funerary markers discovered throughout the African territories.

The onomastic features of the inscription, however, are the most idiosyncratic of its aspects (Ilan 2001).[25] The use of the personal name, *Iudas*, which is associated with specifically Jewish contexts elsewhere, bolsters the classification of the inscription as "Jewish"; however, complicating this interpretation is the fact that the inscription also dedicates its deceased to the elusive *Manes*.[26] Yet this is only one of a series of epitaphs that dedicate to the *Di Manes* a soul who bears an idiosyncratically Jewish name. Other epitaphs within Le Bohec's corpus also pair Jewish names with a *DMS* marker.[27] In most instances, the onomastic idiosyncrasies of the deceased furnish the primary indication of the cultural complexity of the epitaph.

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[25] The name of the deceased, *IUDAS COSMU*, is unusual within Roman North Africa. For more extensive discussion of this name, see chapter three.

[26] Tal Ilan has suggested to me that *Iudas* is a definitive Jewish name, which was especially embraced by converts. There are not enough comparanda within North Africa to support the second assertion in a local context.

[27] For example, another text, which is now lost in the archives of the Bardo Museum in Tunis, appears to be similarly culturally situated. It is incised into a small plaque of black marble, which commemorates the life of a girl who had lived one year and 21 days. The text reads, *D(iis) M(anibus) s(acrum)| Sabbatis, pia vix(it) | anno I, dieb(us) XXI* "To the sacred Manes, Sabbatis, a pious girl who lived one year, 21 days", figure 1b, above). It contains a name of Semitic origin and a dedication to the *Di Manes.* The name *Sabbatis* suggests a more complex cultural context. Names with *Sabbat* roots are of Semitic origin and appear to have been assigned by both Jews and Christians in North Africa and Rome (Kajanto 1963, 107). This inscription bears markers of Christian and Jewish identity, along with the *Dis Manibus* dedication. See discussion of onomastics, *infra*, chapter three.

For the past century, scholars of Judaism in antiquity have labeled inscriptions that bear simultaneous markers of "pagan-ness" and "Jewish-ness" as "problematic" and "marginal." Scholars have offered various responses to this perplexing juxtaposition. Jean-Baptiste Frey insisted that a simultaneously Jewish and pagan artifact was nearly impossible: he used the presence of a *DMS* marker on an epitaph as sufficient grounds for its exclusion from his collections of Jewish inscriptions from Rome (*CIJ* 27, 29, 34, 37).[28] Leonard Rutgers has taken a different approach. In an appendix to *The Jews of Late Ancient Rome*, he states that no *DMS* inscriptions have ever been described as "conclusively" Jewish, explaining that the inscription of *DMS* in either Rome or North Africa has never been accompanied by an image of a menorah or the engraving of Hebrew (1995, 271–2). He argues that even if inscriptions could be both Jewish and dedicated to *DMS*, such texts were proportionally marginal and insignificant (1995, 272). As such, he claims that they "constitute too problematical a category" to be useful in the investigation of Judaism in antiquity (1995, 272).[29]

Each of these arguments depends on several previously outlined problematic assumptions about ancient culture and the use of artifacts for its exploration. These include presumptions that (1) "Jewish" and "pagan" communities are necessarily distinct; (2) the meanings of the categories "Jewish," and "pagan" need not be articulated because they are apparent; and (3) the evidence for these groups can easily be differentiated as either "normative" or "extrinsic." Moreover, these assertions depend on the review of Jewish epitaphs within Italian, but not African contexts. Finally, it is worth noting that in the case of North African epitaphs, menorot only rarely accompany verbally inscribed epitaphs at all. Therefore, the coincidence of menorot and *DMS* ligatures can hardly serve as a criterion for inclusion or exclusion of inscriptions from the North African Jewish corpus (*cf.* Rutgers 1995, 269–271). Patterns within North African Jewish epitaphs resist related assessments. Though the total number of Jewish *DMS* epitaphs is less significant within the entire Jewish corpus, what is important is that their numbers are more

[28] E.R. Goodenough acknowledged that *DMS* texts were possibly produced by Jews, yet he also noted that such inscriptions would have been produced by the Jewish "fringe"—the most uneducated and superstitious of Jews who inhabited the southern Mediterranean (1953, 2.138–9).

[29] Scholars of early Christianity have struggled with similar questions, as *DMS* inscriptions are even more numerous among Christian inscriptions within North Africa and the rest of the Roman world.

significant among the earlier epitaphs, which were contemporaneous to popular North African use.[30]

When these Jewish epitaphs are examined according to a different methodology, distinct conclusions about their significance within North Africa are revealed. The Jewish invocations to the *Di Manes* indicate the desirability of a common propitiation of the deified ancestors or gods of the underworld, appeal to whom benefited the soul of the deceased in its afterlife. Though scholars continue to question how epitaphs that dedicate the deceased to pagan gods and employ pagan understandings of an afterlife could also be Jewish, such modes of inquiry appear to miss the point. In North Africa, invocation of the *Manes* was a normal response to the death of a loved one among some Jewish and non-Jewish populations alike.

B. *Merged Symbols and Synthetic Divinities in the Later Principate*

Other epitaphs indicate that during later periods, some commemorators may have appealed to both Jewish and Christian gods in times of death. One inscription, from the ancient town of Chusira (Kissera), bears a symbol of an equilateral cross; four diagonal branches extend upward from its center, and an omega and an alpha occupy opposite lower sectors of the quadrant (*CIL* 8.705*d*; Figure 3).[31]

Figure 3. Entablature engraved with cross/menorah symbol, Kissera, Algeria *CIL* 8.705d. Sketch reproduced with permission of Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften

[30] Though this symbol is not pervasive within the entire Jewish commemorative corpus, I suggest that it is proportionally common within those Jewish epitaphs of corresponding and earlier periods. After all, most Jewish epitaphs derive from later periods when the notation of *DMS* had already become outdated among all groups. The proportion of the term's use must be determined only in comparison with the total number of texts from the period of the earlier Principate, which is quite small.

[31] This stone consists of four pieces, three of which are inscribed with Latin text and script (*CIL* 8.705*a–d*). This figure, (*d*), has not been reexamined by *CIL* because it was recorded by description.

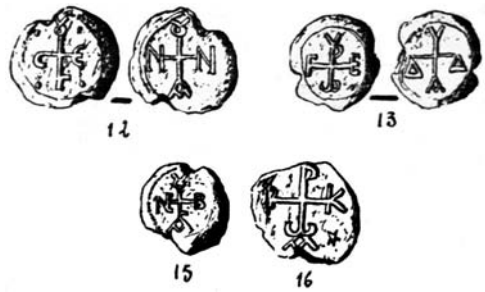

Figure 4. Byzantine seals from Carthage bearing Christoform insignia
Sketch: Icard 1934, pl. 2, nos. 12, 13, 15, 16

The resulting image depicts a menorah protruding from a cross. The elaboration of a cross symbol is common among Christian artifacts of the fourth through sixth centuries, B.C.E. (Figure 4): crosses are occasionally extended into forms resembling the symbol of the Neo-Punic Tanit, or letters are attached to the tip of each cross in extended formations (*e.g.*, *Bardo* no. 36).[32] In a comparable manner, this image explicitly combines a symbolic representation for Christ with that of a menorah (Figure 3).

Similarly merged Jewish symbols appear elsewhere in Africa in different and subtle ways. Upon initial inspection, one epitaph from the Gammarth region appears to exemplify the iconography and epigraphy of "conventional" Jewish funerary commemoration (Hachlili 2001, 138–140): it includes two menorot with curved tripod bases, a palm, shofar, and ethrog, and is inscribed with the Hebrew text "Shalom." Yet an additional symbol—that of a cross—provides the structure for each of its menorot (Figure 5).

Another funerary graffito from a catacomb in Tripolitania contains a similar type of image; Romanelli describes it as a menorah with nine straight branches and a straight horizontal base, which is bisected by a

[32] Byzantine lead seals from Carthage frequently present other symbols or letters extending from the structure of a cross (Icard 1934). In such cases, the images apparently associated with one religious sphere are used as modifications of expressions of the other identity. This image of the menorah cross serves as an additional example of this trend, which extended through the Byzantine world.

Figure 5. Marble funerary stele incised and painted with menorot and inscription, Gammarth catacombs, Carthage Museum, Tunisia
Photo: Author

cross-like superstructure: "il graffito con candelabro e crisma stilizzato su un tumulo deposto al pede" (1977, 112; fig. 3, 114; Figure 6a).[33]

Some might argue that these symbols are not synthetic because the Christian component of the sign might be anachronistic—that these Christian symbols were not yet used as Christian markers by contemporaneous and local populations. Within each area where the "merged" symbols have been discovered, however, the equilateral and Latin cross, in addition to that of the chi rho, were used as distinct Christian symbols during the same periods (*e.g.*, Figure 3 in Proconsularis and Figure 6b in Tripolitania).[34] The "cross" portion of these images, therefore, represents an identity symbol concurrently and independently used by local Christian populations.

Most scholars' analyses of such combined symbols have been brief or apologetic because the "Christianizing" of the menorah is discomfiting to some. Hachlili asserts that such "imperfect" representations

[33] The shape of the image resembles the menorah from Kissera (*CIL* 8.750d), but not the one from Gammarth. Two outward-leaning palms also flank the image. This graffito was discovered in the proximity of multiple other depictions of menorot, which do not exhibit internal crosses. Other artifacts, such as lamps, depict similar images (Le Bohec 1985, 20).

[34] Aurigemma notes the frequency of the appearance of the Latin cross within the iconography at Áin Zára in the Tripolitanian desert (1932, 195, 238–9). Particularly see iconography of tombs 54 and 56.

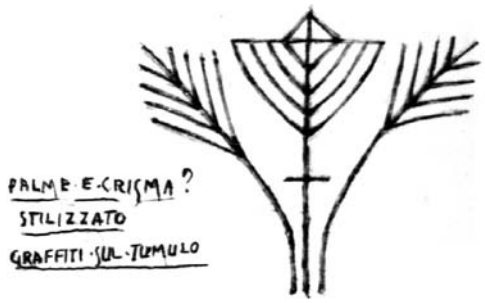

Figure 6a. Menorah graffito and excavator's commentary from catacombs at Oea; Romanelli 1977, 112, fig. 3. Reproduced with permission of "L'Erma" Bretschneider

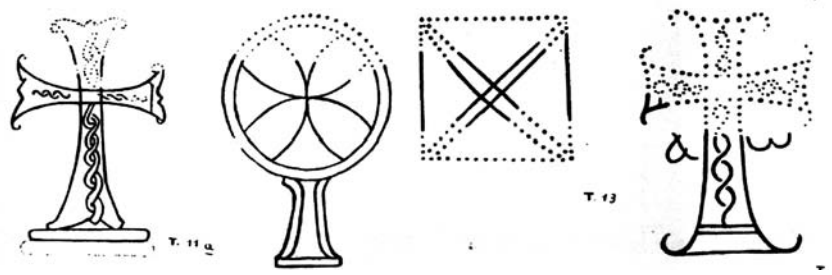

Figure 6b. Sketch of Latin crosses present within burial complex at Aín Zára, preserved within Aurigemma 1932, tab. 7.
Reproduced with permission of Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana

of the menorah would only have been produced by Christian groups who would have appropriated Jewish imagery (2000, 202).[35] Similarly, Simon considers such images to be Christian, and to represent the Christian understanding of two stages of revelation (1962b, 183). Le Bohec identifies the symbols as Jewish, but declares the impossibility of such a combination of a menorah and a cross in his evaluation of a similar image on a North African lamp: "Cette religion [Judaism] honore un Dieu unique: la 'croix' que l'on a pensé voir sur les lampes à la *menorah* de Nundinus, pourrait bien n'être que le Tav, la dernière

[35] This vague use of "appropriation" is problematic because it summarily eliminates the possibility that those who considered themselves to be true "Jews" could have been "appropriating" Christian imagery or ideas. As such, the variations in the symbol's depiction demonstrate an important point about the use of the menorah itself in North Africa. The symbol may have been viewed as malleable, or able to be tailored to the interests of those who engrave it.

letter de l'alphabet hébreu, symbole qui, précésement, désigne Dieu" (1985, 20). Yet, in each of these cases, the "cross" formation at the center of the menorah cannot simply be explained as a "Tav." This explanation is problematic at the most basic of levels—there is no evidence that Proconsular Jews even knew what a Hebrew "Tav" was (see Figure 5).[36]

These commemorative images pose problems for contemporary scholars, but there is no indication that they did for the ancients who used them. Maximally, combinations of the menorah and cross indicate the degree to which some people saw it as possible, appropriate, and desirable to identify simultaneously with the multiple gods and practices that the two images signify.[37] Minimally, they indicate that though distinct Christian groups used these symbols, those Jews who rendered these images were not disturbed by this. They may not have been sensitive to the cross's integration into the structure of the menorah, or to variations in the menorah itself.[38]

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[36] Though various epitaphs include the Hebrew word "Shalom," they do not provide any indication that the word was anything but a symbol (*cf.* Lapin 1999). Aside from one, more extensive epitaph in Hebrew from Mauretania Tingitana (Le Bohec no. 82), no evidence exists that Jews in North Africa knew how to compose other words in Hebrew.

[37] The combination of the image of the menorah with that of a cross has been recognized in other places within the Mediterranean. Within her examination of the origin, form and significance of the menorah, Rachel Hachlili has noted patterns of representing crosses within menorot in Roman Palestine (2001, 270–272). Hachlili has preferred other interpretations that some of these images may not be menorot at all, but rather, of the "tree of life." She states that most of the attested instances of such combinations probably derive from Christian contexts (2001, 272). Hachlili's exact methods of identifying a site as Christian are unclear. Other chancel screens within churches in the Palestinian region pair distinct images of the menorah with those of the cross. One architectural fragment from fourth through fifth century Sicily, in the town of Catania, pairs the images of an encircled cross next to that of a five-armed menorah (Bucaria 1996, 54, fig 5; Hachlili 2001, 274, fig. D6.16). Specific North African Jewish epitaphs, such as this, have been viewed uncomfortably by the scholars who have studied them.

[38] The appearance of the "non-seven-armed" menorot in non-burial contexts is confusing for similar reasons. It is unclear whether these designs may have been produced by or for groups other than the populations identified with more certainty in burial contexts. Is it possible that either pagans or Christians might have adopted the image as a symbol, rather than as a representation of a sort of practice or ideology? A cluster of menorah images from Oea, in Tripolitania, depicts the varying possibilities of representations of the number of branches of menorot. In one burial niche, some menorot are depicted with seven-branches, while adjacent tombs might have nine or twelve (Romanelli 1977, 112, fig. 3). Certain scholars, such as Hachlili, correlate deviations in menorah design (from the seven-branched tripod base form) with the possibility of a differing underlying ideology (Hachlili 2001, 200–201). She also suggests that they, alternatively, "might be the result of mistakes and less than perfect

Scholars consider the menorah to be a "clearly recognized symbol of Jewish identity" (Hachlili 2001, 280). Yet the creative and explicit modification of this sign with another one implies a more complex type of indexicality and, perhaps, an indication of a more complex type of divine supplication for death.[39] To these deceased, perhaps Jewish and Christian gods were as contiguous, identical, or multiple as were many deities in the eclectic African pantheon.[40] To their commemorators, their simultaneous supplication was both appropriate and desirable. As the *DMS* symbol, menorah, and cross markers indicate, ancient conceptions of deity/deities were more complex and ranging than modern taxonomies of Jewish "monotheism" permit (*cf.* Fredriksen 2003, 12). Though some Jews may have viewed a simple menorah as the only appropriate symbol to adorn an epitaph, others disagreed. At times of burial, other African Jewish texts integrated commemorative symbols that evoked the synthetic devotional, funerary, and burial practices of concurrent African Punic, Roman, and Christian groups.

III. Corpse Treatment, Burial Method, and Burial Space

Though the symbols that mark epitaphs' surfaces are immediately visible, other aspects of commemorative practices are less immediately apparent. Stages of African funerary and burial processes largely remain undocumented. The majority of regional funerary customs, treatments of corpses, and processes of disposing of the deceased still remain matters of speculation. In some instances, however, the archaeological record more definitively indicates how a corpse was treated (cremated or inhumed) and contained (placed in a sarcophagus or directly into the

workmanship" (2001, 202). These Tripolitanian images do not necessarily suggest such conclusions. It is unclear whether differing numbers of branches of a menorah might indicate distinct ideologies, practices or simply an emulation of a distinct design, rather than a demonstration of an ideology to which it is attached.

[39] Whether the image resembled a "normative" menorah with seven curved branches, a Punic-like symbol, or one combined with a cross, it signified a range of acceptable and possible practices to commemorate the deceased. It symbolized allegiance with a set of ideals or ideas (or even perhaps, ethnicity), but in no case does it represent the same ideals or ideas in any given instance. Just as the form of the image may be mutable, so too may the identities that the image symbolizes and the deities to whom it refers. Though the menorah is the "Jewish symbol *par excellence*," (Hachlili 2001, 177), the meaning of *par excellence* changes according to each different person, place and time.

[40] See the extensive discussions of the African pantheon(s) in Cadotte (2007).

earth).[41] So too does material evidence occasionally elucidate the practices employed for housing the dead (above or below ground, in isolation; or in groups) and for decorating related spaces. Evaluation of Jewish evidence for these burial practices requires comparison with the broader burial practices of the regions in which this evidence was situated.

A. *Corpse Treatment and Methods of Burial*

Scholars insist that dominant patterns of Jewish treatment of corpses in North Africa appear to accord with those considered conventional for Jewish burial practices elsewhere in the Mediterranean: North African Jews inhumed their deceased (Burns 1997, 3). Though inhumation might have been the preferred Jewish method of burial in all these regions, most North African evidence for this remains inconclusive. The majority of Jewish stelai were discovered out of context, and scant physical evidence cannot correlate an above-ground discovery of the stele with the type of burial it once marked. The Jewish stelai that we possess may have once marked inhumed burials. Yet these markers equally may have originally designated burials of all types including cremation. Though Jewish practice of inhumations appears to be consistent, the possibility remains that individual Jews may once have cremated their deceased.

Some evidence definitively attests to Jewish practice of inhumations, especially where the burial materials have been found *in situ*. Certain architectural features of the underground burial complexes in Gammarth, Oea, and Sirta furnish more secure evidence for Jewish practice of inhumed burial. Moreover, some conclusions about inhumation practices can be made because, despite the geographic diversity of these complexes, certain of their physical aspects resemble one another. The loculi in each region that served as interment spaces for the deceased share common measurements that correspond to the space required for the extended inhumed adult corpse.[42] Uncharred bones discovered

[41] Except, of course, where ephemeral materials—such as wood or cloth—may have been used. The preservation of these materials depends entirely on the local environment. Likewise for the washing or dressing of the corpse—though Roman and Egyptian customs provide more thorough records of the treatment of the actual body (washings, anointings, etc.), it is unclear exactly what funerary processes were typical for North Africa (Burns 1997; Toynbee 1971).

[42] Other underground burial complexes occasionally provided niches, perpendicular to the chambers of the catacomb, to fit only urns containing cremated remains or bones, as in Lepcis Magna (de Miro-Graziella Fiorentini 1977).

Figure 7. Loculi in Gammarth catacombs, Gammarth, Tunisia
Photo: Author

within these complexes additionally substantiate that the entire skeleton of the deceased was extended in each loculus. Despite the area's previous disruption by grave robbers, Delattre's monks found both disturbed and non-disturbed human remains in loculi during their informal excavations at Gammarth (Delattre 1904, 4–6). The articulations of the skeletons varied with Gammarth alone—some skeletons were positioned on their side, while others' arms were crossed (Delattre 1904, 6).[43] Most corpses discovered at Gammarth appear to have been placed directly within their corresponding loculi.[44]

Another burial type required the composition of an individual tomb around the corpse itself. This method was employed in the hypogeum at Oea where commemorators created a tomb by plastering over piles of rocks that surrounded the corpse (Romanelli 1977, fig. 1; Figure 8a). The burial complex at Sirta (Macomades) may have also employed a similar treatment for the body.

[43] An anonymous monk who writes to Delattre records that "les squelettes de ces trois *loculi* étaient dans leur position normale, couchés sur le côté. La position de cubitus des deux squelettes semblait indiquer que les corps avaient été deposes les bras croisés sur la poitrine," while "superimposés dont l'un (celui de dessous) avait la tête tournée du côté de la chambre du fond du *loculus*" (Delattre 1904, 6). Photographs of the hypogeum in Oea include images of human remains, but these are not measured or described in the accessible reports (Romanelli 1977). Due to the disruption of the entire complex, and the sketchy records of the skeletons' positions, it is impossible to undertake a worthwhile analysis of the significance of the corpses' burial positions.

[44] Both Davis' and the monks' records of viewing skeletons *in situ* indicate the popularity of this method of burying the deceased directly into the earth.

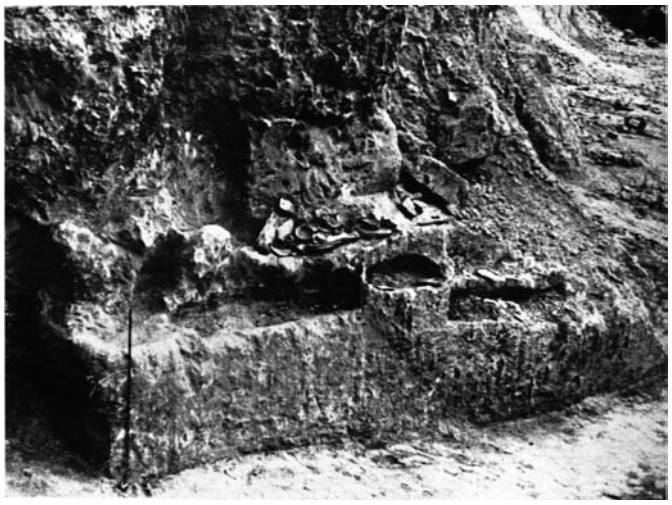

Figure 8a. Plastered tomb from catacomb in Oea, Tripoli.
Romanelli 1977, 112, fig. 1. Reproduced with permission of "L'Erma" Bretschneider

Figure 8b. Plastered tomb from cemetery at Aín Zára in Aurigemma 1932, fig. 10
Reproduced with permission of Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana

At different times, sarcophagi were employed to contain corpses at both ground and subterranean levels. One stone sarcophagus along the central Tunisian coast was discovered above the ground, marking a Jewish burial within (Le Bohec no. 12). Remains of wood and nails within some Gammarth loculi also indicate the possible use of wooden

Figure 9. Painted terracotta ossuary from Gammarth Catacombs; Carthage Museum, Tunisia
Photo: Ferron 1956 pl. xi

sarcophagi there (Deiattre 1904, 4–6). Additional evidence attests the use of smaller containers for secondary burial at Gammarth.[45] Some bones, possibly of secondary deposit, were discovered in uninscribed jars. Other terracotta containers from Gammarth were shaped and inscribed with carbon (e.g., Ferron 1956, pl. xi, Figure 9).[46] How do such corpse treatments and burial methods associated with Jews compare to those of their North African neighbors?

In the past, writers and scholars have indicated that North African Jewish methods of burial differed from those of their neighbors. Assertions within Christian literary texts have grounded modern scholars' arguments that Roman Africans practiced cremation while Jews and Christians distinctively practiced inhumation.[47] To substantiate these

[45] Ferron discusses the Punic tradition of using carbon to etch commemorative texts; this custom extended into later periods throughout the region (Ferron 1956, 107, n. 2). Also see Leynaud discussion of carbon use in burial inscriptions in Sousse (1937, 135).

[46] Davis's swashbuckling accounts—styled as adventure/explorer narratives—suffer from the strained credulity and hyperbole that, both delightfully and sadly, beset that genre. When he is not preoccupied with recounting hyena attacks, he can provide useful descriptions of artifacts. In some cases, he provides indirect accounts of burial containers at Gammarth. Included in Davis' reported finds is one pile of round nails (Davis 1861; Delattre 1895, 13), and, while Delattre does not elaborate on Davis's discovery, he reports additional and similar finds. In a rare pamphlet, published in 1904, Delattre preserves a missive from an anonymous monk who had excavated a different series of loculi. The monk records the presence of many rounded, flattened nails within the complex, as well as a wooden dowel (Delattre 1904, 4–6). Delattre and others noted that no sarcophagi were used in this burial complex, but, presumably, any wooden planks would have decomposed by the time of their discovery. The presence of nails (Davis 1861) indicates that some wooden superstructure was originally present. Similar finds of imperfectly preserved artifacts—presenting the same challenges of interpretation—were identified at Sitifis (Logeart 1935–1936, 78).

[47] Burns argues, "the most significant deviation of Christian from Roman imperial practice may have been the firm commitment to inhumation rather than cremation.

claims, scholars compare the presence of material remains of pagans' cinerary urns (*e.g.*, Barrier and Benson 1908, figs. 1–17) with their general absence within definitively Jewish and Christian contexts. If this fundamental distinction is accurate, it could serve the important function of indexing the difference between the Jewish practices of inhumation from the local population's burial methods.

But for two principal reasons I believe that the consensus that inhumation served as a definite marker of Jewish identity is unwarranted. First, this consensus does not account for the prevalence of inhumation in non-Jewish populations in North Africa. Unlike other areas of the Greco-Roman world, African Punic and Libyan populations had practiced inhumations in the North African territories for centuries before such practices became popular elsewhere in the later Empire (Février 1991, 181). Extensive evidence exists for Roman period inhumations in ancient Thina (Barrier and Benson 1908, 53) and Leptiminus (Mattingly 2001, 107–135). Intact corpses were buried within the Roman and Christian necropoleis and hypogea surrounding Hadrumetum (modern Sousse) and elsewhere (*cf.* Logeart 1935–1936, 74–76).[48] Definitive evidence for Jewish inhumations, then, accords with evidence for traditional African methods of burial. Second, most of the evidence of Jewish funerary and burial practices postdates the broader third-century shift toward inhumation throughout the Roman Empire. By the time the extant evidence for Jewish burials was manufactured, the practice of inhumation already dominated burial practices in North Africa.

In addition, the African Jewish methods of enclosing the inhumed dead were somewhat conventional for their time and region. In loculi of several African burial complexes, corpses were discovered to have been placed directly into the earth in ways similar to the practices at Gammarth (Logeart 1935–1936, 75). In other cases, just as some Jews used sarcophagi to enclose the dead, so too did many other African groups in earlier and later periods. While Punico-African burials depended on lead and wooden sarcophagi to contain the deceased, the use of stone sarcophagi grew increasingly popular among African

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This I suspect may have owed as much to the Jewish roots of African Christianity as it did to the belief in the resurrection of the flesh," (1997, 6).

[48] The "grottes" and hypogea at Sitifis included primarily inhumed burials with articulated and disarticulated bones. For further discussion of comparable burials within underground burial complexes in Algeria, see Logeart (1935–1936, 69–101).

burials in the early Empire.[49] These sarcophagi were placed above and below ground, and, as in Christian burials in Leptiminus, were situated within hypogea (Ben Lazreg 2002, 342–3, fig. 15). Piled stone burial beds within underground Jewish tombs from Oea (Romanelli 1977, 112; Figure 8a) resemble the construction of the Christian "piled stone" sarcophagi at Áin Zára (Aurigemma 1932, 30, fig. 10; Figure 8b) within the same province of Tripolitania. Secondary burials are also attested in African contexts. Jars and caskets of bones were discovered outside of Carthage, Constantine (Logert 1935–136) and in Lepcis Magna (di Vita-Évrard, Fontana, and Musso 1995, 159–160; fig. 6).

Jewish methods of burying the deceased, therefore, largely accord with local custom throughout North Africa. In possible contrast, no evidence definitively indicates that Jews used cremation as a form of burial or used amphorae as a primary burial containers—both practices commonly employed by their neighbors (*e.g*, Leptiminus). Perhaps this difference could be considered as categorical.[50] Yet, the absence of Jewish evidence for these practices should not be regarded as definitive: we cannot rule out the possibility that Jews once adopted these practices, because the customs had already lost popularity in the region in periods earlier than most documented Jewish burials were completed. The constructions of extant Jewish sarcophagi, ossuaries and tombs commonly replicate those of other groups entirely. Manners of Jewish burial generally accord with local burial custom.[51]

B. *Burial Architecture and Decoration*

Idiosyncratic Jewish burial architecture at Gammarth has been cited specifically as a proof for African Jews' enactment of burial practices

[49] Punico-African groups had placed their dead in lead, stone, and wooden sarcophagi for hundreds of years (Utica), while Romans introduced the use of marble and limestone sarcophagi during earlier centuries C.E. Some of these sarcophagi remain exposed within museum collections today in Lampta and in Tunis. Other grave goods, such as small tables, have been discovered in regional burials (Benichou-Safar 1982, 344–6); it is possible that nails or dowels from Grammarth serve as vestiges of either decomposed sarcophagi or furniture.

[50] Unlike many Christian burials from the fourth and fifth centuries, none of these tombs appears to be in mosaic. This type of burial, which becomes much more prevalent in the late fourth and fifth centuries, is extremely common among Christians. These are found within basilicas (in more lavish cases) as well as within above-ground necropoleis and subterranean burial complexes.

[51] See discussion of a related topic regarding an Italian sarcophagus, in Cumont (1916, 9–11).

learned in Palestine and advocated by Babylonian rabbis (*b. Baba Batra* 100b–102b). In this way, Jews' uses of these practices would serve to index alterity from local populations. As scholars have classified Jewish burial as diagnostic in this way, one might expect that the setting, architecture, and decoration of Jewish burial complexes would differ strikingly from those of others in the same region—only if Jewish burial architecture were unusual within local contexts would one anticipate a need to consult extra-regional comparisons to explain it. Most surprisingly, this is not the case. The situation and architecture of Jewish burials at Gammarth and elsewhere, which included above-ground stelai, underground passageways, loculi, and hypogea within catacombs, follow the prototypes of burial architecture established by other populations within Roman North Africa.

The first possibly Jewish burial type is characterized by the situation of an above-ground stele over a buried corpse. Even the discovery of a free-standing stele above ground, unfortunately, may not indicate that the original stele was placed free-standing and above ground; most extant funerary stelai were either discovered out of context in isolation or in reused contexts.[52] Some Jewish grave markers may well have originally been clustered with others above ground or may have been placed in isolation. The absence of definitive mappings of stelai's find contexts has further obstructed understandings of original placements of these grave markers and their possible relationships to other ones.

The discovery context of some burial markers occasionally indicates a possible relationship to other groups of burials. For example, one Jewish epitaph from Thina was discovered above ground, but close enough to the area of a funerary necropolis to suggest its original inclusion in or around the necropolis (*e.g.*, Le Bohec no. 7). On the other hand, the stratigraphy of other markers might indicate more complex relationships between Jewish and neighboring burials. Certain Jewish markers from Carthage were discovered within areas that contained smaller, above-ground cemeteries. The Christian cemetery at Damitous al-Karita,

[52] Nineteenth-century methods of recording these artifacts prevent us from ever rediscovering their original contexts. In many of the earlier publications, the stones were drawn but their find contexts were not described. At times, *CIL* provides additional details about epitaphs' discoveries, but this information is often omitted from most of the initial publications. A prime example of this method of documenting antiquities is demonstrated by the fastidious cataloguer of Algerian antiquities, Delamare (1850).

for example, appears to have overlain a group of preexisting Jewish burials in the same location.[53] Ambiguous stratigraphic records impede understandings of whether the Jewish burials were contemporaneous with, or preceded, the early Christian burials.

Evidence from more secure contexts indicates that some Jewish burials may have been deliberately clustered together. In certain areas of Tripolitania, individual hypogea appear to accommodate only groups of Jewish deceased. The architecture for these burials consisted of underground chambers that were accessed by a series of steps and tunnels. Those in Oea contained burial beds and loculi that were placed in parallel to its larger chamber. Stucco and stones separated these graves from the room outside. The hypogeum in Sirta was built closer to ground level than the one in Oea. It required fewer steps for entry from the ground above and consisted of laterally arranged loculi that contained primary burials (Bartoccini 1928–1929, 189, fig. 2).

Other Jewish burials were situated among even larger groupings of hypogea and catacombs. The connected underground burial complexes in the outskirts of Carthage, in modern Gammarth, were constructed similarly to the hypogea in Tripolitania, but on a much larger scale. These catacombs were accessed by a series of steps and continued for hundreds of meters under the Gammarth Hill.[54] The documented chambers were of varying sizes, but most of them extended into regularly carved burial spaces, or loculi (Figure 10a). These loculi were cut perpendicularly to the chambers and possessed interior measurements of roughly .43 m × .52 m × 1.72 m, to accommodate the bodies (Delattre 1904). Rectangular terracotta tiles and marble plaques (usually .43 m × .53 m), carved or painted with the names of the deceased, sealed the loculi from the chambers outside.[55] The arched ceilings in the chambers and the sizes of the loculi remain relatively uniform throughout the complex.

Diverse Jewish uses of isolated, collective, and group complexes for burials represent conventional variations within distinct regions and periods in North Africa. Since the earliest Punic settlement at Carthage,

[53] The Jewish epitaphs from Damitous-al-Karita were found in an area subsequently used for many Christian burials in the same region, beside a fifth-century basilica in Carthage (Delattre 1884).

[54] Delattre counted 200 chambers in total, though this estimate may not be accurate (1895, 20–40).

[55] These measurements are largely my own. These were taken in the Carthage Museum in September, 2003.

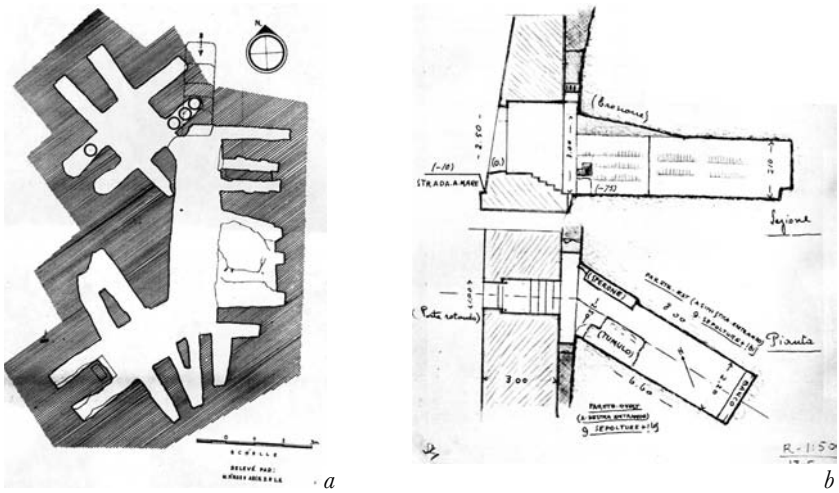

Figure 10. Plans of catacombs of Gammarth (1) and Oea (2). Sketches: Ferron (1950); Romanelli, (1977). Reproduced with permission of "L'Érma" Bretschneider

isolated funerary stelai were used to mark individual African tombs, and African populations frequently clustered their burials.[56] After periods of Punic and Roman colonization, hypogea and catacombs had become equally conventional methods for burial in specific areas of North Africa. The region's soft sandstone, tufa, was easily exploited to carve burial niches and complexes. Situating the dead within carved rock, then, was an easier task than carving sarcophagi for them. Such excavated burial methods had become conventional among western Phoenicians as early as the seventh century B.C.E., but African pagan and Christian populations continued to employ these methods throughout the North African region into the first century.[57]

[56] Their traditional use in North Africa differs from their use in Rome. Among African Punic, Roman, or, later, Christian populations, these types of individual burials in necropoleis were more traditional than clustered family burials in Rome. The reasons for the clustering of burials, however, varied within North Africa. In some cases, it was the manner and motivations of death that appear to group people together. For example, all children sacrificed to Tanit were buried together in Tophet—this clustering seems to have trumped family relationship to group burials together). In other cases, burials appear to be grouped together according to kinship groups.

[57] At times, they contained sarcophagi made of lead, stone, and wood (Utica, Kerkuane, Lepcis Magna, etc.).

Just like Jews, Africans Punic populations at Utica, Hadrumetum, and Salakta, and Christians at Hadrumetum, Kerkennah, Hadjeb-el-Aioun, and Áin Zára, as well as people of unknown cultural provenance (Gabès) built and joined hypogea and catacombs to create larger burial complexes for their deceased. Underground complexes also proliferated within the areas of Hadrumetum (Sousse), Utica, Sitifis, and Sullectum (Salakta).[58] Carved stairs provided access to most of these underground chambers (Ben Younès 1995, 77). Some complexes contained small niches and loculi for incinerated burials, loculi for inhumations, and altars, which ran parallel and perpendicular to the chambers in the catacomb (Kleiner 1998, 116; Di Vita-Évrard, Fontana, and Musso 1995, 159). No evidence indicates that these styles of burial reflected particularly ideological motivations—rather, they tended to appear wherever the soft tufa stone was most abundant.

The internal arrangements of many of these burials, furthermore, were relatively consistent. In most cases, tiles (Sullectum; Hadrumetum), bricks (Sitifis, Kenchela), and marble slabs (Hadrumetum, Áin Zára) covered the lateral loculi in order to separate corpses from the common chambers of the catacomb. Christian catacombs at Áin Zára, which neighbor those complexes in Tripolitania (Sirta, Oea), employed comparable constructions. Broadly, then, Jewish burial situation, groupings and architecture are typical of contemporaneous North African burial practices.[59]

C. *Decorating Spaces for the Dead*

Catacomb decoration was an additional feature common to Jewish and African burial practices. Jewish African burial complexes conventionally included painting on walls, ceilings, and beside epitaphs. In Oea, painted symbols of menorot, palms, and branches surrounded epitaphs on the walls of the underground tombs. Gammarth's walls were even more extensively decorated. Images carved into the walls of the entrance to the Gammarth catacomb began at ground level and flanked its rock-

[58] See discussion of other African catacombs in Leynaud (1922, 440–465).

[59] In many cases, the basis for these burial groupings remain difficult to determine. Disassociation or complete absence of epitaphs for the deceased, or the lack of patronymic elements preserved in names on epitaphs in later periods, impedes attempts to discern whether burial groups necessarily related to kinship or common cult practices.

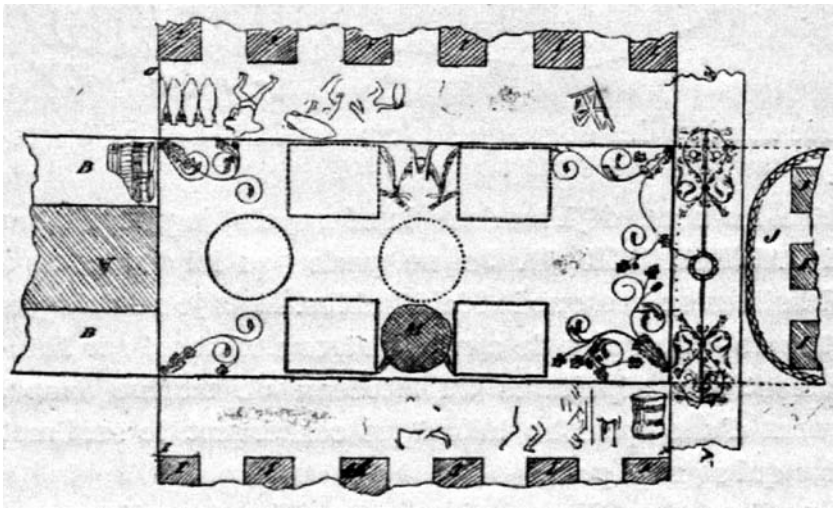

Figure 11. Sketch of fresco ceiling from Djebel-Saniat-Tsenira that Delattre identifies as "la plus belle décoration," of the Gammarth catacombs. Sketch: Delattre 1895, 32

hewn stairways. Carvings depicting rays emanating from the catacomb's entrance are still visible in the rock entrance at the complex's northernmost access point.[60] Remnants of other designs, such as palms and branches, also remain visible in this section of the corroded limestone. It is unclear whether the entrance to the Oean burial space might once have been similarly elaborated.[61]

Earlier accounts and drawings of the Gammarth precinct, however, record that the carved stones on the surface of the catacombs' interior also bore colorful decoration.[62] According to its initial explorers, white and colored fresco covered the interior surfaces of the complex. Theft,

[60] A menorah also appears to be carved into the limestone, though the poor state of preservation recommends caution in evaluating these particular images. See n. 61, 63.

[61] The entrance's exposure to the elements has induced the erosion of the engravings and the decorative scheme. When I visited the catacombs in the French Military Cemetery in September, 2003, Tunisia had recently suffered unseasonable floods. The recent deluge alone appears to have affected the integrity of the crumbling rock. The entrances to the catacombs (both the outer surfaces and inner dirt floors) are unprotected and actively eroding.

[62] Davis does not mention this fresco, but he supervised the excavation of a small portion of the precinct. His workers, who included one Italian ex-patriot who called himself a miner, were also working by candlelight (Davis 1861, 471).

general destruction, and the catacombs' exposure to humidity, however, have removed all traces of this plaster.[63] A rough pen drawing of the ceiling is reproduced in Delattre's original publication (1895, 13); this along with his and de Vogüé's correspondence remain the only documentation of the images in Gammarth's fresco (Figure 11).

Written correspondence between de Vogüé and Delattre present the most detailed accounts of the ceiling decoration. These exchanges, which occurred between their respective explorations of the burial complex, were summarized by de Vogüé (de Vogüé 1889, 176–186) and were incorporated into Delattre's report (1895). Goodenough translates this specific description of the fresco:

> Some of the burial places preserved their plaster covering: it is sometimes white as snow. On this plaster were painted decorations. One chamber, which unfortunately has suffered badly, still shows traces of red and green coloring; in a corner of the ceiling can be seen a simulated cornice ornamented with garlands, and a vase shaped like a crater.

Delattre labeled this crater as Roman and sent an unpublished drawing of it to de Vogüé.

> In another chamber the decoration was made in relief in stucco and painted. A frieze ran around the loculi; two moulding frames, 53 centimeters wide, are still to be seen there; one surrounds a horseman, the other a person standing near a tree and holding a whip with his right hand; the frames alternate with oval panels. At the bottom two winged genii hold a circular medallion which must have contained a bust in relief, without a doubt the head of the family buried there. But the most beautiful drawing is that of which I send you a sketch.... Between the edge of the ceiling and the tops of the loculi there ran a frieze which represented vintage scenes. On one side, men can be seen carrying amphorae of wine, and setting them up in a row side by side [with a wheel, probably connected to the wine press, on the end]. On the other side a woman stands near a round vat or large basket; two persons come toward her, one on foot, the other mounted on a horse. Near the door are two other vats or baskets....
>
> But the portion best preserved is the inner face of the lower arch or arcosilum in the wall on the right of the plan. It has arabesques definitely of the Roman style, framed in a line of *raies de Coeur*, the same motif is found on the mosaics of Carthage belonging to the early part of the second century of our area.

[63] As of November 2003, scratches remained visible at the entrance to one of the catacombs. The limestone is chipping away and will soon be entirely effaced by erosion. Nonetheless, the engraved images appear to include rays emanating from the entrance, palms, and, perhaps, a menorah with extended branches.

> We have visited other subterranean chambers which are notable also for remains of the same style of ornament, where the vine holds an important place, as also olive and palm trees. I will also mention seeing the ship. The examples which I have supplied you are enough to give an exact idea of the decoration of the whole necropolis. I should add that in none of these chambers have we seen an indication of such alteration as would suggest that the necropolis served as a burial place at two different periods.
>
> (Delattre 1895, 32–33)[64]

Descriptions by subsequent visitors to the catacombs confirm the accuracy of de Vogüé's and Delattre's records (1889; 1895). Delattre's drawings also substantiate the detailed images de Vogüé described.[65] By the early 1950s, all traces of these images had disappeared.[66]

The decorative schema on Gammarth's exterior and interior walls reflects local tendencies to adorn burial spaces (Delattre 1895). Elaboration of limestone at the entrance to African underground burial complexes is a common feature. At the Bon Pasteur catacombs in Hadrumetum, motifs incised in the walls of the complex's limestone entrance, which include emanating rays, flowers, and vegetation, are still visible.[67] Foucher records that comparable images adorned entrances to other hypogea in the same region of Sousse, though these have eroded since (1953, 86). The Gammarth catacombs, carved into the same soft rock as the others along the Tunisian coastline, bear decoration typical of entrances to such underground burial structures.[68]

Frescoed decorations on the interiors of burial complexes are also traditional in the region. In the necropoleis at Sidi Salem and Menzel Temine, in the Cap Bon region of Tunisia, images of birds adorned the walls (Fantar 1980, pl. II, fig. I); so too in Áin Zára (Aurigemma 1932, 158), while earlier Christian burial complexes in Leptiminus have paintings of triremes and rowboats on their walls (Ben Lazreg

[64] These are Goodenough's English translations of the French (1953, 2.66–7, 69).

[65] The excavations that took place in the catacombs between the initial forays in 1861 (Davis 1861) and Ferron's explorations in the 1950s (1951, 1956) destroyed any evidence for the existence of this fresco.

[66] Goodenough states that by the early 1950s, when he asked the Revered Dr. Elmer H. Douglas, an American Protestant Missionary in Algeria, to examine these frescos, all traces of them had already disappeared (1953, 2.67).

[67] These decorations, however, are protected by plexiglass. These portions of the catacomb are well conserved and they are displayed to tourists.

[68] At the entrance to the Bon Pasteur catacombs in contemporary Sousse, incised images of flowers and rays emanating from the catacombs entrance are still visible.

2002, 343, fig. 16). Stucco in relief similarly creates decorative borders in the underground tomb of Gelda in Lepcis Magna (di Vita-Évrard, Fontana, Musso 1995, 155).

Other burial fresco contains the varied colors and images comparable to those reported in Gammarth's decoration. Rich painted plaster from a smaller pagan or Christian hypogeum outside of Sousse appear to bear many similarities; Foucher describes its white plaster interior walls covered with red and green lines and decoration (1953, 86), while images within circles cover the surface of one of the walls (1953, 87).[69] The predominant motif of that hypogeum's wall is a Dionysiac triumph, with vine motifs, flowers, garlands, kraters, and overflowing wine.[70] Other images, such as that of personified seasons, small putti, cornucopias, and grape clusters decorate areas surrounding the actual loculi (1953, 91 B). Foucher interprets these viticulture motifs as signifying the locally popular funerary depiction of the Triumph of Dionysos. This visual trope is common within pagan art, but is later employed within Christian art and adapted to understandings of abundance and afterlife (Jensen 2000, 59). Many of the wine, krater, and viticulture motifs Foucher describes are present in Delattre's descriptions and De Vogüé's descriptions of the decoration at Gammarth. In Gammarth, human figures, typical stylistic motifs, as well as boat imagery and viticulture sequences, so common in North African pagan and early Christian commemorative art (*cf.* Jensen 2000, 26), are reportedly utilized as appropriate commemorative expression. Such fresco design indicates the ultimate acceptability and desirability of burying Jewish dead within a space decorated with popular motifs.

IV. Objects and Food for the Dead and the Living

Gammarth furnishes the most extensive evidence of the donation, of grave goods to the deceased. The inclusion of vessels for oil, food, and perfume storage suggests additional aspects of funerary and burial

[69] In this case, it is local construction that appears to have caused the demise of these catacombs. These too were mostly destroyed by the time of their publication.

[70] Animals such as panthers flank images of viticulture, as "une lourde guirlande de feuilles de vigne soulignait l'ensemble…les feuilles de vigne complètement déployées aux extrémités, sont retenues par les liens vertes entre lequels ont été pratiqués de petits cavités peintes en rouge" (Foucher 1953, 87).

practice (Hachlili 1998, 304–305; Setzer 1997, Hirschberg 1967; Goodenough 1953, 2.67–9; Delattre 1895). As previously described, the catacombs' pottery had fallen victim to the brash and disorganized methods of early explorers and ersatz archaeologists, who deprived subsequent generations of archaeologists of the catacombs' material contents and contexts (Falbé, Davis, Beulé, de Sainte-Marie, M. d'Herrison, and Delattre).[71] In the absence of extant evidence, the details of explorers' travelogues and letters provide the most detailed evidence for the presence of ceramic containers and provisions for the dead.

The British adventurer/archaeologist Davis was the first to record the presence of grave goods at Gammarth (1861, 472). He states that in "one niche and at a distance…we discovered a little jar and a glass lacrymatory" (Davis 1861, 472–3; Delattre 1895, 13).[72] In 1904, missionary monks noted the presence of additional ceramic containers in letters to Delattre (Delattre 1904, 2–8). Further discussion of such grave goods from Gammarth halted for 52 years, until Ferron's footnote in "Un Hypogée Juif" in which he notes the discovery of ceramic unguentaria and jars from Gammarth, and describes their colors as ranging from yellow-green to red ochre (1956, 105, n. 3).[73] Though Ferron does not mention the presence of glass, the unguentaria he photographed (Figure 12) correspond with the type of Davis's earlier record of a glass "lacrymarium" (*cf.* Davis 1861, 488).[74] Ferron includes photographs of some of Gammarth's larger jars and provides their average measurements

[71] Goodenough witnessed the last phase of official excavation: he reports that he visited the Gammarth excavations "just" before writing Volume II of his corpus, probably in the early 1950s. Presumably, this was during the short campaign of Ferron (1951; 1956).

[72] In his 1895 publication, Delattre is aware of Davis's account, but provides only a French-translated excerpt from Davis's adventure guide as proof of the existence of the finds.

[73] He lists the measurements of some of these: of plate VI ("hauteur moyenne: 0 m 12; la couleur de la poterie va du jaune verdâtre à l'ocre rouge.…") and pl. VIII, fig. 1 ("dimensions de l'objet: hateur: 0 m. 209; diamètre de la panes: 0 m. 126. Terre rouge saumon, engobe clair"; 1956, 105, n. 3). Ferron states that "il faut mentionner en tout premier lieu de nombreux *unguentaria*, dont nous représentons quelques exemplaires parmi les mieux conserves…La plupart des autres débris céramiques appartenaient soit à des amphores ou à des grandes jarres (pl. VII), soit à un type de vases comme celui que nous reproduisons…" (1956, 105, pl. IV, VIII).

[74] Virginia R. Anderson-Stojanovic provides more detailed discussion of the correlations between shifts in terminology and understandings of the uses of the unguentaria. These vessels were formerly called "lacrymaria" as scholars once believed that they functioned to collect tears of mourners (Anderson-Stojanovic 1987, 106).

Figure 12. Grave goods from Gammarth catacombs that include glass containers and unguentaria (1) and ceramic unguentaria (2)
Photos: Ferron 1956

(1956, pl. VII; VIII, fig. 1), but he does not elaborate additionally about their typology or present location (Figures 13a, b). He omits record of their find context and whether any traces of material substances were found within them such as grain, wine, or oil.[75]

Because archaeologists have traditionally either ignored or overlooked such finds, it is difficult to interpret their contexts, contents, or uses in the burial area. The lack of detailed information about them precludes ultimate knowledge of their precise functions and dating, but we can make some reasonable guesses based on analogy.[76]

The presence of unguentaria here is particularly significant, as such small containers are commonly found in local Punic and early

[75] I have not been able to find these artifacts in the museum collections of Carthage or Tunis. They are not listed in the museums' acquisition records or catalogues. Note the difference in treatment and interpretation of artifacts, as set against the analyses of archaeologists such as Logeart and Leynaud; the latter describes how "nous avons recueilli *un petit flacon* en terre cuite blânchatre, en forme de petit sachet, étiré dans la partie supérieure, pour former le goulot; il semble avoir contenu un liquide rougeâtre." (Leynaud 1922, 321).

[76] I have made various attempts to compare the images in Ferron to typologies of amphorae developed more recently, as in Docter (1999, 485–492). The unfortunate lack of published photographs of the majority of the unguentaria and jars prevent the possibility of dating the finds through local typologies and chronologies.

Figure 13*a*

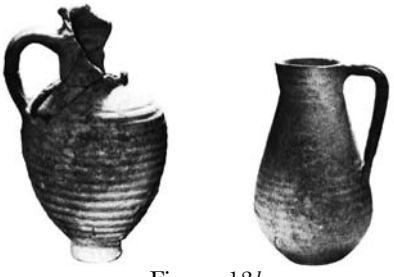

Figure 13*b*

Figure 13. Grave goods from Gammarth catacombs that include ceramic amphorae and bowls (a) and ceramic pitchers (b).
Photos: Ferron 1956, Pl. VII, VIII

Roman burial sites, as well as other Hellenistic and Roman burial sites throughout the Mediterranean (Benichou-Safar 1987, 271, 391; Anderson-Stojanovic 1987, 105). Unguentaria may have contained water, oils, or wine, and varied in shape and exact function in funerary contexts (Anderson-Stojanovic 1987, 121). Various hypotheses exist to explain the vessels' uses in the ancient Mediterranean: they could have been used as grave goods, or as part of libations performed during funerary ceremonies (Anderson-Stojanovic 1987, 122; Weinberg 1965, 187–189).[77] The position and fabrics of the ceramics would assist understandings of their funerary or burial functions.[78] The presence of these diagnostic vessels, however, implies the possibility of their use in funerary or burial contexts.

The larger "jars" are suggestive for similar reasons (Figure 13a). Those Ferron depicts are amphorae and jars whose shapes and composition are common for the region and period (Ferron 1956, pl. VII, fig. 1 and 2).[79] It is possible that some of the jars contained food for the dead, as they resemble the ceramics used for such purposes

[77] See Weinberg (1965, 187–189) and Jeddi (1995, 151) for further discussion.

[78] The presence of a glass unguentarium (Davis 1861, 488), indicates a slightly more opulent burial. None of these burials, however, appear to fall into the category of "lavish burials" that the Christian writers so frequently criticized. For further discussion of polemics against ornate burial practice, see Burns (1997, 1–2).

[79] Ferron notes that "La plupart des autres débris céramiques appartenaient soit à des amphores ou à des amphores ou à des grandes jarres, soit à un type de vases comme de la panes" (1956, 105 n. 3, Pl VII). For amphora typogies consult Freed (1995, 155–191).

elsewhere in Carthage (Benichou-Safar 1982, 263–4). Though Ferron does not provide the exact sizes for all the larger jars, he does provide photographs of some of them. Their shape and size indicate use for storage and suggests the possibility that these larger implements were used to serve either as grave goods, food for the dead, or as part of a commemorative practice for the deceased.[80]

Similar burial goods were included in other mortuary complexes in the region. Excavations of Punic necropoleis, such as those at Sidi Salem in the Cap Bon region of Tunisia, have produced comparable types of storage vessels and unguentaria (Fantar 1980, 121). Analogous finds have also been recorded in African pagan and early Christian period tombs of the necropoleis at Thina (Barrier and Benson 1908, no. 8) and Hadrumetum (Leynaud 1922, 345, no. 2, 3).[81] Though the individual loculi within the "Bon Pasteur" catacomb in Hadrumetum contained hardly any grave goods, many ceramic amphorae ("avec anse ou sans anse") were discovered in the catacomb's galleries (Leynaud 1922, 232).[82]

Artifacts with more secure find contexts and their facilitation of material analysis have enabled some archaeologists to make more accurate assessments of such vessels' uses in North African funerary and burial practices in different regions. In the catacomb of Bon Pasteur, an early Christian burial complex, one larger amphora, taller than 1.0 m, was discovered in front of a more elaborate tomb. Due to the presence and shape of the cover of the amphora, Leynaud concludes that the jar was used for libations to the deceased.[83] Noël Duval attests

[80] Though it is possible that empty jars would have been placed within the burial complex, such a speculation seems unlikely. While some of the jars were filled with bones, it remains unclear whether they were used for secondary, but not primary burial; commonly used amphorae were for primary burial in the west in Sitifis, and further south in Leptiminus during earlier periods of earlier Punic and Roman habitation. For discussion, see Mattingly, Pollard, and Ben Lazreg (2001, 128).

[81] Unfortunately, these finds are also uncatalogued and unpublished, though they are apparently maintained in the archives of the Bardo Museum in Tunis. See M.-H. Fantar (1980, 120–123, pl. 1–11).

[82] The largest of these measured 25 cm high × 20 cm in diameter, the smallest 11 cm high × 8 cm in diameter (Leynaud 1922, 232). Leynaud states that these containers are shaped like gourds, and that the larger ones are for the *fossores*, while the smallest are for oil to feed the lamps.

[83] Leynaud explains that the amphora "presente, sur la face oblique qui réunit le col à la panes, une ouverture rectangulaire faite intentionallement, de 15 cm de longeur sure 10 de hauteur, à bords assez irreguliers, et dont la destination avait été certainement de permettre d'y placer l'extrémité inférieure du tube libatoire. Auprès d'elle, était un vase en poterie commune, à une anse et à cannelures horizontals" (1922, 234). In this case, due to extensive comparanda, Leynaud is probably correct.

the absolute conventionality of these goods and such uses for them (Duval 1995, 199). Regarding those artifacts found in early Christian as well as pagan African burials, he describes how: "On rappellera que, surtout au IV^{e} siècle, les témoinages sont multiples des pratiques qui attestent la survivance dans les cimitières des usages païens d'offrandes alimentaires ou autres (parfums) et de repas funéraires sur la tombe lors de la sépulture ou aux anniversaries (usages surtout liés à l'adoption de l'inhumation" (Duval 1995, 199). The presence of jars and unguentaria at Gammarth suggests the use of similar feeding, funerary, and annual commemorative rites for the dead, which resemble those of third, fourth, and fifth-century neighbors.[84]

The lack of publication of more humble finds from North Africa is a pervasive problem; the corresponding lack of records for the find positions of the artifacts within the tombs makes it difficult to identify the practices that required them. But the comparison of these types of artifacts at Gammarth with those discovered in more secure North African burial contexts indicates the possibility that food, anointing, and libation practices may have taken place at the graves of the deceased there. Though we cannot assume that the presence of grave goods signifies facile understandings of the afterlife (Ucko 1969), their existence implies some commemorative practice of the living which was enacted for the benefit of the dead.[85]

There are no ancient texts that explicate Jewish mortuary devotion to pagan or Christian conceptions of deity, divinization, or the provision to the dead who were thought to have continued to live in some capacity. It is unclear whether Jews as well as Christians selectively venerated or perhaps fed their ancestors through commemorative rites. Epigraphic and archaeological evidence, however, suggests these possibilities. Just

[84] The lack of *mensae*, or burial furniture, within Jewish burial spaces has been pointed to as a distinctly "Jewish" trait of the catacomb (Delattre 1895, 17). Grave furniture was certainly characteristic of certain underground burial complexes in North Africa. Though the absolute absence of furniture cannot be certain—some remnants of the furniture may have decomposed or have been stolen—similar situations within burial complexes have been attested: hypogea in the cosmopolitan region of Sitifis also lacked furniture (perhaps for the same reasons; Logeart 1935–36, 76).

[85] In contrast, the presence of decorative fineware, or gifts, in the tomb would sustain different interpretations of local understandings of and practices that related to the afterlife. These goods seem to signify eating and libation practices. It is unclear, however, whether additional goods (fineware, jewelry, etc.) once accompanied these burials but were subsequently stolen or removed from the tombs.

as an invocation to the *Manes* indicates that some Jews may have viewed their ancestors as divinized, so too might they have viewed the deceased as requiring food or drink.[86] Perhaps some Jews who buried their dead at Gammarth stored food there for their celebration of the deceased or stored it for the direct benefit or consumption of the deceased themselves. The presence of grave goods at Gammarth correspond with ranges of regional African practices that relate to life, commemoration of death, afterlife, and divinity.

V. Choosing Acceptable Neighbors in Death

Scholars have traditionally presumed that "Jewish" African burial complexes were uniformly Jewish. Alleged animosity between the Jewish and Christian communities has underscored the probability of this separation and has encouraged the designation that Christian epitaphs found above ground in the Gammarth region were of secondary placement (Le Bohec 1981a, 168; *cf.* Setzer 1997, 193). Evidence does not necessarily sustain this assumption about Jewish and non-Jewish burial separation, though such presumptions have discouraged scholars from questioning possible variations among burial populations. Does extant evidence indicate combined burials of Jewish and non-Jewish individuals and populations? Might African pagans or Christians have buried their

[86] Some pagan funerary practices, that preceded practices of Christian martyr cult, reflected the possibility of feeding the dead through libations. Though he writes from another region, Lucian clearly articulates how in other portions of the Mediterranean, Greco-Roman mourners believed that the enactment of practices at a tomb directly affected the deceased in some way. In one of his satires, *Charon*, he mocks Romans' commemorative practices. In a certain passage, Charon asks Hermes why human beings put corpses into "receptacles" and "chambers for the dead" and, while observing funerary and burial practices among the living for the first time, Charon questions Hermes about other aspects of the practices of burial by exclaming "Why, they are putting flowers on the stones, and pouring costly essences upon them! And in front of some of the mounds they have piled faggots, and dug trenches. Look: there is a splendid banquet laid out, and they are burning it all; and pouring wine and mead, I suppose it is, into the trenches! What does it all mean? [Hermes replies] What satisfaction it affords to their friends in Hades, I am unable to say. But the idea is that the shades come up and get as close as they can, and feed upon the savory steam of the meat and drink the mead in the trench. Eat and drink, whether their skulls are dry bones? [asks Charon], Oh fools and blockheads! You little know how we arrange matters and what a gulf is set between the living and the dead!" (Lucian, *Char.* 2.181–182 [Harmon, LCL]).

deceased alongside those who marked themselves as Jewish?[87] Features of certain burials support affirmative answers to these questions.

In some cases, onomastic signs provide more definitive evidence for such "mixed" burials. This pattern is exemplified by a plaque for a certain Moses discovered within a Christian hypogeum in Sirta, Tripolitania. As only one of 52 other name plaques, it stands out as being the only name of definitive Jewish context among its neighbors.[88] Other names within the complex, such as Balerianos and Anniboros, indicate the placement of individuals of Libyan, Punic, Roman African, and Hellenistic cultural association.[89] The burials for all of these individuals, as well as for Moses, clearly occupy the same space,[90] and though chi rho symbols have been drawn onto the majority of these plaques, the symbols do not adorn all of them.[91] The placement of these symbols, furthermore, cannot necessarily characterize the marked deceased as "Christian": their application was not necessarily contemporaneous with the placement of the epitaphs themselves. In this complex, then, a

[87] Scholars have assumed that distinctions between Jewish and Christian burial spaces evolved: Enrico Josi poses the question: "È difficile poter oggi determinare in quale anno vennero stabilitti c.c. seperati de sepolcri pagani o giudaici" in Josi (1953, 1619).

[88] Bartoccini identifies one other marker as "Jewish" for onomastic reasons—that for an "Agag" (= Le Bohec no. 2). His evaluation is based on the rationale that because "Agag" is a name reported in the Hebrew Bible, that this "Agag" was from a cultural context which emulated such a reference (1928–1929, 129, no. 48). The Agag in the Bible was an enemy of the Israelites, and this name represents one relatively common within Phoenician and Northwest Semitic onomastic practices. I disagree with this assessment and Le Bohec's inclusion of it in his own corpus. See discussion in chapter one.

[89] Names in Bartoccini (1928–1929) include those such as *Balerianos* (no. 14), *Abedevais* (no. 18), and *Abdusmun* (no. 29), and *Anniborius* (no. 8).

[90] The funerary plaque from Thina, dedicated to *Abedeunis*, was found within a funerary necropolis. Excavations of this area are presently in fragile condition, and a number of the burials that were uncovered from the cemetery were moved to the museum of Sfax. Nonetheless, this was the only explicitly Jewish epitaph discovered within the necropolis. The original location of the epitaph is unclear, but there is no reason to believe it originates in an entirely distinct cemetery. This, as well as other inscriptions, may have been originally situated in necropoleis with other deceased of diverse cultural identities.

[91] Though Bartoccini considers these chi rho symbols to have been engraved on the funerary plaques at the time of burial, these images appear to have been applied later (1928–1929, 187–190). The crosses are not applied to either the plaques of Moses (Le Bohec no. 1) and Agag (Le Bohec no. 2), but this omission is not exclusive to these names—some conventional Roman, Greek, and Punic names are also missing the application of the chi rho. For discussion of posthumous applications of Christian graffiti, see discussion of Church of Ravenna and for examples from the Levant, Fernández (1994, 221–230).

Jewish Moses may well have been buried with worshippers of multiple, continuous, and contiguous deities, possibly including Christ.

The cultural ambiguity of other burial markers raises such possibilities. For example, certain stelai in Gammarth do not provide idiosyncratic cultural markers; the epitaph for "Donata" from Gammarth bears no cultural symbols and commemorates a woman whose name might fit into multiple cultural contexts. Here, this epitaph is understood to be of Jewish context. Yet is her tomb marker *necessarily* Jewish because other Jews are buried in the same place?

In the absence of definitive markers, the examples of Moses and others suggest that Jews, non-Jews, and those of undetermined cultural provenance may have been buried together. Evidence for and against such practices is equally indeterminate. Yet each of these cases caution against traditional assumptions, based on literary interpretation, that all Jews are only buried with other Jews in Roman North Africa.

VI. Evaluating Sameness and Difference

Traditionally, analyses of Jewish burial have served as means for scholars to make broader claims about North African Jewish culture. Scholars have largely grounded these claims by focusing on the idiosyncrasies of the loculus orientations at Gammarth. Christian theologians and scholars of Jewish history have all emphasized the importance of this distinction and explained it in ways to justify connections between North African and Palestinian Jewish communities. Yet their assertions require additional questioning after the more careful review of features of these and other North African catacombs. Do Gammarth burials prove that Jews used burial practices to mark cultural difference and foreign origin?

The orientation of the loculi at Gammarth is unusual for burial niches within North Africa. The Gammarth loculi are carved perpendicular to the larger chambers of the burial complex instead of a more conventional parallel orientation. On the basis of this discrepancy, scholars have distinguished the Gammarth loculi from other underground burial complexes of Proconsularis, Tripolitania, or Rome. They have argued for a causal relationship between the direction of the Gammarth loculi and the Talmudic or Levantine attestations, as this perpendicular direction is one used in Palestinian Jericho (Delattre 1895; Le Bohec 1981a, 167) and described in the Babylonian Talmud. These correlations have

supported 110 years of assertions that those buried within this complex were of eastern and Palestinian origin or consciously enacted Talmudic prescription.[92] Gammarth loculi's directions differ from those of their Jewish and non-Jewish neighbors. Yet other features of the Gammarth catacombs counter the feasibility of explaining this difference through the "eastern" origin, or Talmudic context of the burial community.

First, though a higher proportion of the epitaphs within the complex are painted in Greek script and with Greek names, most of its epitaphs bear complex onomastic, linguistic, and stylistic features that are distinctly occidental. The marked differences between the Gammath epitaphs' names, languages, and scripts (as well as Gammath's grave art and decoration motifs) and the corresponding features found in eastern burial complexes caution against facile "connections" between Palestinian and North African communities. The presence of funerary goods in all cases and figurative images in the necropolis (*contra* rabbinic stipulation) cautions against explaining their related burial practices through rabbinic texts.[93] The existence of similarly perpendicular loculi in African Tripolitania (Lepcis Magna), as well as in some of the Jewish catacombs in Rome (Via Torlonia), indicate that perpendicular loculi are not entirely exceptional in the regions that surround Africa Proconsularis.[94] Though the reason for the particular positioning of the loculi is elusive, the related explanation that the Gammarth Jews necessarily possessed direct exposure to Palestinian or rabbinic prescription is strange—this would be the only facet of the Gammarth

[92] There are some arcosolia within the complex. The hypogeum at Damitous-al-Karita, where one Hebrew inscription was found, contains arcosolia, rather than loculi, like at Gammarth. These burial areas are only 2–3 km apart.

[93] Some of the frescos within the Gammarth catacombs appear to be quite similar to those within Rome, such as the Via Torlonia catacomb. The types of finds discovered in the Italian catacombs, however, were quite distinct from those in Africa. For example, the proliferation of lamps within those Italian catacombs, in addition to the ubiquity of "gold glasses," is characteristic of the Italian catacombs, but these finds were entirely absent from the Gammarth excavations (see Rutgers 1995, 51–92). Though these differences could easily be ascribed to pillaging of the African complex, it is odd that not one such remnant would remain. This supports a slightly different type of burial and votive practice than those found elsewhere. Beth She'arim's catacombs and decoration indicate a distinctly Hellenistic context that differs markedly from that at Gammarth. See discussion in Weiss (1992, 357–359).

[94] For more detailed discussion of perpendicular loculi within tombs, see di Vita-Évrard, Fontana and Musso (1995, 165).

practices that might reflect such frameworks.[95] Though the architects of the Gammarth catacomb might have possessed a specific motivation for the perpendicular direction of the loculi, the catacomb's broader reflection of local practices of language and architecture, in addition to local precedent for the loculus direction, challenges the view that there were causal connections between the Gammarth catacombs, acts of religious mission from Palestine, and rabbis' teachings in Babylonia centuries hence.

An additional aspect of the Gammarth catacomb that has been considered indicative of "Jewish" provenance is its distance from the center of inhabited areas. Such a desire to separate the dead from the living is assumed to be a distinctly Jewish (as opposed to pagan or Christian) inclination. This characterization is problematic for two additional reasons. First, Delattre uses superficial examination and local hearsay (from the nineteenth century no less!) to assert that the area of Gammarth Hill was never inhabited in antiquity. No careful excavations have ever been attempted to determine the absence of local settlement patterns, and the existence of the French military cemetery at the top of the hill impedes subsequent exploration. Second, that the burial complex may have been situated outside the inhabited center of town would not be a distinguishing trait; burial on the outskirts of town is conventional among Africans from earlier antiquity through the Vandal conquest (Duval 1995, 190).[96]

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[95] Scholars such as Hirschberg (1974) and others point to the accordance of Gammarth burials with rabbinic prescriptions.

[96] Duval describes how "Le règle antique qui répartissait les necropoles à l'extérieur, de preference autour des voies d'accès, continue d'être respectée, au moins dans la période anterieure à la conquête vandale…Notons que la notion de *pomoerium* et de limites de la cité est difficile à cerner en Afrique où peu de cités ont une enceinte pour la periode classique. D'autre part, beaucoup entre elles ont connu une rapide extension qui modifie les critères de répartition des nécropoles du II^{e} au IV^{e} siècle…" (1995, 190). Duval and other archaeologists presently consider erroneous the application of the terms *intra* and *extra muros*, which have informed the debate about burial in Africa (Duval 1995, 201; *IFCC* 3.3–4). Additionaly, Jewish tombs, unlike Christian tombs, do not appear to be enclosed in votive spaces. No burials appear to be associated with devotional structure and no definitively Jewish tombs are associated with martyr burials. In apparent contrast, Christians continued to bury outside of martyr complexes and the wealthiest could afford to dedicate money to be buried within a basilica (*e.g.*, at Lampta) or cover their tombs with mosaic (Gauckler 1928, no. 6). While no Jewish burials appear to adhere to these practices, which become increasingly common in the fifth and sixth centuries, they appear to resemble other, poorer Christian burials of the same periods (Hadrumetum, Aín Zára).

Arguments about North African Jewish burial have emphasized cultural and spatial "apartness." They have drawn attention to the ways signs of local "difference" in North African Jewish burial necessarily serve as markers of sameness to Jewish pan-Mediterranean culture. A closer examination of Jewish burial practices indicates that most of them index local practices and barely index distinctly at all. At times they signify important differences through the use of idiosyncratic symbols, such as menorot. Yet the substantive aspects of the burial practices—*e.g.*, the marking of the stele, the appealing to deity, and the treatment and orientation of the corpse—appear to be mostly conventional. These burials primarily index sameness to North African cultural practice.

VII. Conclusion

Ranges of Jewish burial practices suggest corresponding cultural variations among Jewish populations throughout in North Africa. In various instances, Jews differently dedicated their deceased to a single god, engraved exclusively "Jewish" signs on epitaphs, and enacted burial in ways distinct from their pagan and Christian neighbors. These practices may have been regionally unusual and may have drawn from ideologies and identities common among Jews from other regions of the Mediterranean. Upon closer review, however, many other African "Jewish" mortuary and burial practices singularly indexed locally normative burial practices. Common resemblances between Jewish and non-Jewish practices of burial suggest that many Jews' burial practices most resembled those of neighboring populations. The latter burial practices demonstrates how embedded were certain Jewish populations in their North African contexts.

Certain traits appear to be common among Jews' commemorative and burial practices and those of their North African neighbors. The use of *DMS* dedications on an inscription or the engraving of a symbol of a cross does not preclude an epitaph's association with a Jewish cultural sphere (*contra* Park 2000, 18–19). Though some North African Jews may have avoided such references in their epitaphs, others appear to have been comfortable with these practices. The idea of Jewish "polytheisms" might appear problematic to contemporary scholars. As I have shown in chapter two, however, such ideas were not necessarily problematic for North Africans generally. Tendencies of *interpretatio* raise possibilities that these understandings operated among pagans, Christians as well

as Jews in North Africa in antiquity (Fredriksen 2003). These epitaphs suggest expanded possibilities about the range of deities to whom Jews appealed in times of death.

Further resemblances between Jewish and "non-Jewish" burial types, architecture, and art also underscore continuities between Jewish and local burial practices. Jews mostly used methods and containers of burial that were common to North Africa. Additionally, Jews appear to have burying, buried, structured, and decorated the permanent homes for their deceased in the same ways as their non-Jewish neighbors. Texts and funerary goods also raise the distinct possibility that participants in Jewish and Judeo-Christian cultures may have also identified with Libyo-Punic or Roman deities and understandings of the afterlife; once deceased, ancestors may have become "divinized" and considered suitable for veneration. Last, a closer examination of the names on epitaphs indicates that presumptions about the exclusivity of Jewish burial may be unfounded. In some cases, it appears that Jews and non-Jews comfortably buried their deceased close to each other in the provinces of Africa Proconsularis and Tripolitania. A Jew an epitaph commemorates may have participated in a more fluid range of understandings about the deities, processes, and contexts for death, which drew simultaneously from specifically Jewish, as well as African pagan and Christian contexts.

When Jewish burial and funerary practices are reviewed more carefully within their North African contexts, they no longer appear as idiosyncratic, transparent, or exclusive as some previous scholars have asserted.[97] Past studies' presumptions have enforced the isolation of Jewish commemorative and burial practices from those of their local environments, and have regarded those artifacts that resemble non-Jewish ones as marginal. Related applications of frameworks from Babylonian and Palestinian texts to explain African Jewish burial have obscured and nullified the possible ranges of cosmologies, identities, and practices among North African Jews. Inter-regional comparisons with other Jewish groups can be instructive, but not until the local comparisons and explanations for them have been exhausted.[98] Local comparison has

[97] This and previous chapters address considerations of burial in Le Bohec (1981) and Setzer (1997).

[98] For an alternative method, see the study of Williams (1994, 38–41).

enabled the observation that material evidence for African Jews appears nearly or entirely identical to that of their neighbors.[99]

This analysis of burial materials, therefore, serves as a corrective to generalizations and arguments previous analyses have justified. African Jewish burial has been used specifically as a proof of Christian continuity in the region, which extends from the Palestinian disciples of Jesus Christ to the dissemination of Christianity in Africa, the writings of St. Augustine, and, finally, the efforts of nineteenth-century French Catholic missionaries. Jewish burial practices have been similarly interpreted to justify ancient Christian claims about the relationship between African Jews and Christians and the prominence of Babylonian rabbinic teachings in Jewish populations throughout the region. These broader claims respond to scholarly interests in African Jewish populations.

Evidence for North African burial contradicts each of these assertions. In doing so, it raises possibilities about how Jews were shaped by the cultures of their neighboring populations and about related understandings of god(s), ancestors, and afterlife. Similarities between constructions of Jewish houses for the dead and those of their neighbors may indicate similarities of domestic spaces among Jews and their Punic, Roman, and Christian African neighbors. Furthermore, the possibility that these groups buried together also may indicate that, in life, they identified with one another. Burial practices are not equivalent to life practices, but one cannot assume that they are necessarily *unrelated* to them. In the case of North Africa, burial practices suggest the degree to which Jews were embedded in and emerged from their North African surroundings.

In certain ways, then, patterns in Jewish burial practices align with those practices reviewed in previous chapters. In some cases, Jews appear to mark their graves idiosyncratically, with markers such as menorot. In other cases, Jews probably marked themselves so conventionally that their graves are entirely unrecognizable as such. In still other cases, some Jews marked their graves in ways that simultaneously indexed similarity to their neighbors and difference from them. In these last sets of cases, the markers of difference might be onomastic or symbolic. In all cases, however, the symbol on a tombstone might itself embody the complex cultural identity of the deceased.

[99] For related methodological discussions, see Duval (1995, 188–189).

These patterns may not be surprising because most of the onomastic and linguistic data actually derive from commemorative contexts. The complexity of the burial process, however, enables this analysis to function slightly differently than that in the third and fourth chapters. Epitaphs exhibit both onomastic and linguistic practices, which integrate into larger systems of burial practices. The interaction of these and other constituent components make burial practice a rich medium of cultural evaluation.

The combined analysis of burial markers and commemorative practices, furthermore, illuminates expanded possibilities for cultural enquiry. After all, even in cases where a menorah marks a funerary stele, the same stele might have covered a tomb filled with grave goods and surrounded by colorful figurative images. Even if an epitaph might index one or more cultural contexts, the burial practices for the same deceased might index an entirely different set. Comprehensive evaluations of systems of burial practice illuminate the complexity of Jewish cultural identities in Roman North Africa.

CONCLUSION

Figure 1. African red slipware bowl with the sacrifice of Isaac (Boston 1989.690)
© 2007 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

In the Roman Provinces Gallery at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, a displayed collection of slipware bowls exemplifies the fine craftsmanship for which North African pottery workers were renowned, and which was copied throughout the ancient Mediterranean.[1] The decoration on one of these bowls depicts a popular motif in fourth and fifth-century Christian art from North Africa and Rome—the Sacrifice of Isaac.[2] On the bowl's surface, Abraham is poised to sacrifice his son, Isaac:

[1] None of these artifacts possesses secure provenance. Over the centuries, such artifacts have accrued on the art market; dubious methods of sale and acquisition have rendered impossible the exact identification of works' origins. Though all these bowls probably originated in North Africa, such pieces were frequently traded throughout the region and were so esteemed that their styles were emulated by artisans elsewhere. For related discussion, see Mattingly and Hitchner (1995, 166–213; 201).

[2] The bowl is shallow, measures 23 cm in diameter, and is composed of fine reddish clay. The measurements accord with the relative size of documented bowls in the same display case.

Abraham's right hand grasps a dagger, while his left hand pushes Isaac's face onto the surface of a burning altar. Isaac's arms are tied behind his back. A divine hand descends from above, while accompanying images of a ram and a tree foretell the story's happier conclusion. The broad design of the piece is typical of the neighboring bowls of comparable period and origin, which depict Orphic scenes or collections of Christian symbols in relief, arranged around the edge of a bowl in a circular formation; Abraham and Isaac, the tree, and the ram, are fixed evenly around this bowl's tondo.[3]

What is the cultural provenance of this artifact? Curators label it as Christian, partly because of its similarity to identified Christian works from North Africa. The bowl is assumed to be one of the many objects Christians dedicated as funerary goods, or donated as votive implements to North African basilicas and churches.[4] Its imagery, after all, appropriately demonstrates symbols and sentiments expounded by early church fathers: the grimacing visage of Abraham and the bent back of Isaac express the pathos within the biblical story, epitomize Abraham's supreme piety, and affirm God's ultimate salvation of Isaac. But are curators entirely justified in their classification of the bowl as Christian, in the absence of a clear and documented find-context for it? Jews, after all, as well as Christians, emphasized the importance of this biblical story in late antiquity.[5] Is there a chance that such an artifact, could have been commissioned, owned, or dedicated by a Jew?[6]

According to the criteria of art historians, it is nearly impossible to tell. In late ancient literary exegesis and visual art, both Jewish and Christian groups emphasized the story of the Sacrifice of Isaac (Hachlili

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[3] Both red slipware bowls and comparably composed lamps from the region share decorative patterns (Hayes 1972; 1980; Adler 2004, 158).

[4] Similar objects are identified as grave goods within Christian North African tombs, though this genre of artifact was frequently exported throughout the Mediterranean; see Mattingly and Hitchner (1995, 198); and Hayes (1972; 1980).

[5] See Hachlili (1998, 246).

[6] Prejudices based on both foreign analogy and rabbinic prohibition of images have shaped scholars' expectations about what a Jewish artifact *should* look like and have informed the typologies of such artifacts. These assumptions and the labels they generate bear distinct consequences; analysis of archaeological materials conforms to such classifications and ultimately reinforces previous assumptions about North African Roman, Christian, and Jewish artifacts and the cultural practices of those who produced them. See the extensive discussions of the problems associated with identifying Jewish artifacts within the work of Ross Kraemer (1991, 141–162). Criteria for determining "Jewishness" of inscriptions is reviewed within P.W. van der Horst (1991). See also my discussion in the introduction.

1998, 244; Jensen 2000, 72). Yet historians of Christian art generally indicate that, until a later period, Christian "Sacrifice of Isaac" scenes rarely depict Isaac as already on top of the altar—usually the image of a burning altar occupies a separate space in the design. In this Boston image, Isaac is positioned directly on top of the altar. This distinct feature of the artifact accords with art historians' guidelines for Jewish versions of the image in earlier periods, although its dating to the fourth or fifth century renders its cultural classification indeterminate (Hachlili 1998, 239–246, figs. V–3, V–5, V–6). Creators of this bowl could have provided a definitive symbol, such as a cross, a chi rho, or a menorah, to demonstrate an authoritative cultural context for the object. This provision, however, was deemed neither necessary nor desirable.[7] To the modern eye, therefore, the bowl appears to be culturally ambiguous. This apparent cultural ambiguity, furthermore, is more common than art historians and taxonomists might like: it manifests itself in many other genres of North African third, fourth, and fifth-century art. Countless objects—such as funerary tiles, bowls, and lamps, which depict biblical scenes and figures such as Jonah, Adam and Eve—fill modern museums in Tunisia and Algeria.[8] These artifacts, too, exhibit distinctly indeterminate qualities; rarely do words or symbols explicitly mark the images as either Christian or Jewish.[9]

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[7] The possible reasons for this are manifold. Perhaps the context of an inscription or artifact may have rendered it redundant to provide a clearer marker of cultural differentiation, or the creator of the object wished for it to be salable to a broader group of people. Alternatively, a person who commissioned or designed such a bowl may not have felt it necessary to make such symbolic distinctions. After all, articulations of individual or group identity might not have been so important within certain North African contexts.

[8] Certain funerary tiles in the Hadrumetum region depicted the face of Christ, but figurative iconography derived from Christian scriptures is surprisingly rare in African Christian art. During these periods throughout the Mediterranean, Christian art frequently favored motifs from the Hebrew Scriptures in both votive and funerary contexts, on sarcophagi, terracotta funerary tiles, and in mosaic. In North Africa, scenes of Jonah, Daniel, Adam and Eve, and the sacrifice of Isaac were most commonly depicted, on which see Jensen (2000, 25). Jensen usefully discusses the complex relationships that develop between popular "pagan" and "Christian" genres of art: "Compare, for example, the fishing scenes and sea life depicted on North African mosaics of the third, fourth and fifth centuries C.E. with the fourth-century mosaic floor at Aquileia, demonstrating how Christian representation Jonah cycle generally belong to this category of maritime art. Christian iconography, apparently, made use of these popular motifs and adapted them to its own uses, imbuing them with a somewhat different meaning" (2000, 48).

[9] When un-provenanced artifacts, such as this Boston bowl, bear figurative images, curators and historians conventionally label them as Christian. After all, scholars

Upon closer inspection, many apparently "Christian," or, "Jewish" artifacts, like the Boston bowl, similarly resist the classifications previously assigned to them, and, once reevaluated, prompt different lines of general inquiry and analysis. For example, should we presume, until proven otherwise, that ancient works of figurative biblical art that possess no explicitly "Jewish" markers should necessarily be labeled as "Christian"?[10] Can words used in an epitaph simultaneously emulate Christian and Jewish notions about an afterlife? Must a symbol be either a menorah or a cross, or can it be both? Regnant theory about Jewish life in Roman North Africa suffers terminally from failure to ask questions such as these. My survey of such North African artifacts demonstrates the need for different approaches to Jewish and Christian materials from antiquity, which, unlike conventional methods, can account for greater complexities within North African archaeology and culture.

Collections of artifacts for Jews in North Africa are traditionally compiled according to scholars' assumptions about the immediate *identifiability* of Jewish materials. Such perspectives are frequently informed by ancient Christian and rabbinic literary polemic. Scholars' convictions about the priority of Jewish identity in antiquity shape their selections of artifacts in additional ways: Jews are believed to have viewed themselves as possessing a singular Jewish identity, distinct from that of their neighbors and similar to those of their foreign Jewish counterparts. Resulting analyses of the Jewish archaeological materials, then, have served to justify readings of the literary record to bolster arguments about discontinuities among Jewish and neighboring populations and about continuities among Jewish populations, in North Africa, Palestine, Asia, Cyrenaica, and Rome. Foreign Jewish analogy, accordingly, has been maintained as the most appropriate tool to explicate North African Jewish artifacts and the culture that produced them.

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continue to assume that Jews abhor red figurative representation on artifacts, despite vast and increasing bodies of evidence and scholarship that demonstrate an opposite tendency. See Steven Fine (2005, 47). This object's (Boston 1989.690) lack of a definitive cultural marker is worth evaluating in its own regard.

[10] Scholars tend to avoid labeling ambiguous figurative art as Jewish, partly due to proscriptions within the Hebrew Bible and within rabbinic texts, and partly as the result of skepticism about categories and possibilities of "Jewish" art. For a complete discussion, see Fine (2005, 1–10). Fine draws particular attention to a passage in the Palestinian Talmud (*y. ʿAbodah Zarah* 3, 3, 42d), as preserved in a Geniza fragment, which describes an exceptionally neutral attitude toward the use of images in synagogues and elsewhere (2005, 98); he favors the treatment of J.N. Epstein (1931, 20).

In this book, I have shown that a contextual examination of Jewish North African archaeological evidence calls into question the logic of each step of these approaches, which extends from the identification of Jewish materials to the method and results of their analysis. My approach has required different sets of questions, which yield different conclusions about Jewish culture Roman North Africa. It suggests that Jews exhibited ranges of practices in North Africa that defied the assertions of "orthodox" Christian taxonomies and foreign rabbinic Jewish prescriptions—as well as scholarly assumptions.

Jews born in Roman North Africa lived in deeply complex cultural environments and their material evidence reflects this. In many cases, North African Jews marked themselves in ways similar to their neighbors—they gave their children locally popular names, used the vernacular Latin to commemorate their deceased and constructed their cemeteries according to local North African custom. At other times, they enacted practices that simultaneously indexed similarities to and differences from their local cultural environments. They built devotional buildings according to local type and decoration, but inserted signs of "difference" into otherwise conventional architecture. In other cases, in the face of death, Jews marked themselves differently from their neighbors. Such cases are largely exceptional but still exemplify African Jews' cultural embeddedness, as Jewish populations frequently used the tools of their local environments to express selective difference.

Occasional discrepancies emerge between Jews' material representations of the living and of the dead. Certain onomastic and linguistic features, for example, may have been added to people's names only after their deaths: in specific areas and times, for example, commemorators affixed the word *Iudaeus* to the name of the deceased, on his epitaph. The dedicants of these epitaphs, however, do not bear the same adjectival form of *Iudaeus* as that attributed to the deceased—the word appears to be accorded to a person only after his death. At other times, names are inscribed in more idiosyncratic scripts on epitaphs—a person's name might have been pronounced conventionally in a person's lifetime, but is spelled in an unconventional script on her epitaph. Such idiosyncrasies, then, point to a curious but necessary problem endemic to the study of ancient materials and religion: which of their aspects respond to the *occasionality* of their commission, and which respond to the circumstances of a person's life whose identity they commemorate? Regardless of the precise reason for these distinctions, each definitively suggests that even Jews whose names were marked differently after their

deaths possessed names that were more typically North African during their lifetimes.

In all cases, this book demonstrates that scholarship can no more excise Roman North African Jews from the dynamics of their local environments than could the subjects themselves. Ample evaluation of Jewish material evidence depends on careful and localized examination. Such an approach yields an inevitable conclusion: the breadth of Roman North African Jewish evidence and culture is far more complex than previous scholars have permitted their analyses to describe.

During the past decade, scholars of ancient history and religion have begun to attempt to research "against the grain" of ancient literature to endeavor a more comprehensive approach to antiquity (Buell 2000, 245–246). A review of the circumstances of the discovery and the subsequent treatment of Jewish, as well as Punic, Roman, and Christian artifacts in North Africa, however, suggests an additional necessity—that of "reading against the grain" of the archaeological, as well as, the literary record. The endeavor of this type of archaeological reading facilitates a more comprehensive approach to North African Jewish artifacts and culture. Acknowledgement of the limitations of this evidence, furthermore, informs this distinct method for the study of the North African Jewish corpus. Traditional methods of framing the evidence depend on polemical or qualitative categories. My replacement of these with internal categories of onomastic, linguistic, devotional, and burial practices, changes the focus of the analysis—this organization emphasizes discernible aspects of ancient action, rather than others' critiques of it.

Simultaneously, I have emphasized the importance of substantively interpreting these types of Jewish practices within their local contexts. I describe Jewish and other groups in Roman North Africa (as well as elsewhere) as being fully situated in their local surroundings. While North African Jewish materials may resemble those of other Jewish groups from elsewhere in the ancient Mediterranean in a variety of ways, I have shown the importance of evaluating them within their local contexts before placing them within their broader Mediterranean, or Jewish contexts. This approach not only expands the possibilities of noticing locally conventional aspects of Jewish practice, but also of specifically local and idiosyncratic aspects of Jewish practice. That is, certain features of North African Jewish practices are idiosyncratically North African Jewish and resemble neither conventional North African nor "conventional" Mediterranean Jewish practice. While menorot may

be markers of "Jewishness" throughout the Mediterranean and within North African contexts, other signs of North African "Jewishness" are more nuanced and are only discernable through close contextual comparison.

One result of this method is attention to the "peace" couplet in Jewish epitaphs, which appears to be a specifically North African Jewish marker. Its signification of linguistic difference can only be identified after closely comparing such inscriptions with non-Jewish local ones. After all, only by comparing aspects of "Jewish" and local linguistic practices can one discern whether a practice is idiosyncratic for a region and indexes a distinctively Mediterranean Jewish context or is idiosyncratic for a region and indexes a specifically local Jewish type of idiosyncrasy. As such couplets are largely absent from other Mediterranean Jewish contexts, they appear to be a distinctively North African Jewish pattern of language use. Contextual evaluation of Jewish materials is the prerequisite for their cultural interpretation.

Some might question the advantages of employing such an approach for the study of ancient Jewish populations. One might ask whether this shift in method simply produces a different type of study rather than a substantively improved one. Does it augment scholars' precise understandings of North African culture? Does it actually contribute to the study of the culture of ancient Jewish populations in the ancient Mediterranean? I have shown that this approach possesses a series of advantages for the study of Jewish artifacts and the populations that produced them. First, its acknowledgement of the fallibility of the archaeological and scholarly record assures a more realistic evaluation of the ancient materials. Moreover, this approach also prevents the archaeological record from being used to fulfill and advance the goals of ancient polemicists: it avoids imposing on Jewish evidence the polemical terms invented by Christian orthodox writers, who were more interested in circumscribing proper Christian theology than in representing the actual habits of their Jewish neighbors. Finally, the method responds to a more complex view of ancient and Jewish cultures: it produces an understanding of a range of possible Jewish practices specific to Roman North Africa.

This approach changes the types of questions commonly asked within scholarship of late ancient Judaism. For example, scholars have consistently struggled to define the general meaning of the word "Jew" or the adjective "Jewish" in the late ancient Mediterranean. This approach, however, questions the utility of such questions in a cultural context

at all. It seeks to determine what the category of "Jewish" might have meant and how it varied within Roman North Africa alone. Certain aspects of Jewish material culture index similarities to Jewish material cultures from elsewhere, but the majority of North African Jewish artifacts primarily exhibit distinctively North African traits. To ignore their reflection of North African practices by favoring their comparison with pan-Mediterranean Jewish types is to sustain a deliberately skewed perspective of the history of a cultural minority. The meaning of "Jew" and "Jewishness" in North Africa varies according to time and region.

This analysis makes it possible to posit that to most Jews in North Africa categories such as "African," "Jewish," and "Christian" were not configured in the exclusive ways ancient Christian artisans and authors, as well as modern scholars, have described. Just as I demonstrate through the Christian lamp in my preface (p. ix), even the most seemingly lucid ancient portrayals of divisions between Jews and Christians need not bear any relation to reality. My distinct evaluations of both the lamp and the remainder of the archaeological corpus raise possibilities that North African Jewish identities were acceptably and desirably complex and that they varied among those who commissioned artifacts with commensurately ranging cultural identifications. A one-to-one relationship between artifact complexity and human complexity cannot be presumed, but in many cases there may be correlations between them.

Three objections might immediately arise in response to this approach. The first is an objection to the modesty of the approach's objectives. This study does not bring scholars any closer to understanding the actual *lives* of ancient Jews and their relationships with those around them. It does not elucidate the circumstances of Jews' arrival in North Africa and does not promote the exploration of gender issues, the occupations Jews held, and their ways of relating to their political and legal worlds. The second objection concerns the inherent circularity of my approach. Though I question the obviousness or *identifiability* of Jewish artifacts, I simultaneously reify these artifacts' identifiability: I consider objects for analysis as Jewish if they are marked with specific names or symbols that are commonly taken to denote Jewish context. I even consider that some unmarked artifacts, such as funerary stelai that are adjacent to those with distinctive Jewish markers, might also be Jewish. In this way, I employ some of the same methods that I have previously critiqued. Last, one might complain that my assumption that North African Jews were primarily embedded in their local environments, rather than in foreign ones, begs

my conclusion about these groups. For these reasons, it might not be surprising that my conclusions about North African Jews emphasize their primary cultural context within local populations, rather than foreign ones. These aspects of the work might appear to be unsatisfying and self-fulfilling.

My answer to such criticism is simple: such criticisms are partly accurate, but they are also necessary and intrinsic to any more responsible approach to antiquity. In the first case, although I would like to produce a more comprehensive historical work, I must refuse to develop an unsupported fiction about the lives of Jews in North Africa. I have only adopted a cultural approach to history because the evidence cannot support a social historical project. Though this decision does not facilitate a grand new vision of the history of Jews and their distribution in the southern Mediterranean, it provides a reasonable approach to a limited body of material and allows us to re-envision the cultures of its ancient Jewish populations. These goals are carefully limited in order to make a contribution, which I hope will prove important, to the ongoing dialogue about Jewish culture in the ancient world.

Second, not all circularity in argument is problematic. The circularity within this project is virtuous and necessary for a variety of reasons. My contextual approach to the Jewish materials certainly shapes the outcome of the analysis. It does so by way of its clear identification of a method and the testing of that method. By no means do I suggest that an "embedded" cultural analysis is the *only* way to approach these materials. I enact this approach, however, to demonstrate the *lack of necessity* of other conventional approaches to Jewish artifacts from the ancient Mediterranean. While more recent cultural studies have emphasized that Jewish populations should be studied from a local perspective, the *enactment* of these studies continues to reinforce presumptions about Jews' uniqueness, their differences from local populations, their intense similarity to other Jews elsewhere in the Mediterranean, and the intrinsic relevance of Talmudic texts. At the very least, my analysis shifts the burden of proof to require that such assumptions be justified by showing that the embeddedness thesis is wrong.

We have no way of definitively interpreting archaeological evidence—artifacts are not personal accounts or cultural maps. But by approaching these artifacts from a local comparative perspective, one at least takes into account the contingencies of life in an ancient world where people did not travel much. Mauretanian Jews probably communicated with their Mauretanian neighbors to a far greater degree than

they did with Jews who inhabited Asia Minor. The material record for its population ought to be considered accordingly.

The physical limitations of the study induce another type of necessary circularity. I can only use as evidence those artifacts explicitly marked as Jewish. The preceding chapters indicate the probable existence of Jewish artifacts that are unidentifiable as such because of their singular indexing of North African conventional qualities. These artifacts, however, remain inevitably elusive within the material record. This is a frustrating reality, but one that must be acknowledged in a more comprehensive examination of the ancient Jewish materials.

Devastations of excavation and lack of interpretive methodology have rendered the category of "North African Jews" as putty in the hands of historians of early Christianity who give precedence to the literary accounts of church fathers, and historians of early Judaism who give precedence to rabbinic sources. This project attempts to rescue and reinterpret the evidence for this small minority group. This study, then, contributes to the study of Judaism and religion in the ancient Mediterranean on a variety of levels. First, it addresses evidence for a population that has been traditionally overlooked in the historical record. Second, it contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural dynamics within North Africa generally. Third, it augments understandings of possible manifestations and proclivities of Jews as a minority population in the ancient Mediterranean. Most importantly, however, it represents a different method of study of Jewish and other minority populations in the ancient Mediterranean. It indicates the importance of deciphering the material record, the circumstances of its discovery, and the substantive implications of choices of taxonomies to review ancient materials. By applying more careful, contextualized, and nuanced examinations to the evidence for Jewish cultures of Roman North Africa, I have developed a picture of this population that is different from previous studies of Jewish populations and adds to broader understandings of the dynamics of late antique Mediterranean culture.

Perhaps, by creating a different vision of Jewish cultures in North Africa, this study invites a reassessment of the artifacts that have been previously classified as Jewish, pagan, or Christian. With a new perspective on the North African evidence, a different cultural study may be engendered. Perhaps the bowl at the Museum of Fine Arts was commissioned by a Jew, who, as in her commissioning of her child's epitaph, unproblematically and deliberately embraced the iconographic

and ideological manifestations of her complex cultural milieu. Perhaps future scholars of these materials and Roman North African culture more generally might ask different and more productive questions about how complex objects relate to the complex identities of those who created them. The application of more careful, contextualized, and regionally determined examinations of the evidence for these populations promises improved and deeper understandings of late ancient North African and Mediterranean Jewish cultures.

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